DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 447 CE 074 233

AUTHOR	St. John-Brooks, Caroline
TITLE	Mapping the Future: Young People and Career Guidance.
INSTITUTION	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris (France). Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.
REPORT NO	ISBN-92-64-15319-5
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	156p.; For related documents, see ED 379 801 and ED 393 211.
AVAILABLE FROM	OECD Publications and Information Center, 2001 L Street, N.W., Suite 650, Washington, DC 20036-4922.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adjustment (to Environment); Adult Education; *Career Education; *Career Guidance; Case Studies; Counseling Effectiveness; *Counseling Techniques; Delivery Systems; *Education Work Relationship; Foreign Countries; Information Needs; Labor Market; *Lifelong Learning; Postsecondary Education; Privatization; *School Guidance; Secondary Education; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS	Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development

ABSTRACT

This report examines the strengths and weaknesses of educational and career guidance in seven Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) countries. Chapter 1 defines educational and career guidance as embracing three key elements: educational, career, and personal/social guidance. Described in chapter 2 is the role of educational and career guidance in helping young people understand their abilities/aspirations and make a successful school-to-work transition. Chapter 3 explores the possible role of educational and career guidance in the labor market policies of OECD member countries and in helping individuals adapt to the changing world of employment. The emergence of lifelong learning as a dominant educational and economic theme is discussed along with the policy implications of the idea of continuous learning in a flexible labor market. The remaining two-thirds of the report focuses on selected career/educational guidance-related issues in the following countries: Austria (adding flexibility to traditional approaches); Canada (multiple recipes for success); Finland (a mass system moving toward individuals); Italy (the need to turn rhetoric into a more consistent reality); Japan (the need for guidance in a changing labor market); Mexico (adding the career element to educational guidance); and Scotland (whether privatization will deliver what clients want). Contains 41 references. (MN)

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MAPPING THE FUTURE

Young People and Career Guidance

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MAPPING THE FUTURE

Young People and Career Guidance

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ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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- to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in Member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy;
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- *to promote and support the development of research activities in education and undertake such research activities where appropriate;*
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Publié en français sous le titre :
CHOISIR SON AVENIR
Les jeunes et l'orientation professionnelle

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FOREWORD

The importance of effective career guidance goes unrecognised by many policy makers – yet properly handled it could have a key role to play in the active labour market policies of OECD countries. It should also play its part in enabling more individuals to lead satisfying and productive lives. Yet the national resources currently invested in this field are too often not being used as effectively as they might be. This is often due to a lack of focus on clear objectives and how to meet them, and guidance systems which are either inflexible and bureaucratic or characterised by gaps and inconsistencies.

Currently, the relationship between education and employment in OECD countries is undergoing profound changes. In the past, most transitions between different levels of education, or between education and work, happened more or less automatically – as young people moved in large number from one system to another. Career guidance was seen as only necessary for problem cases.

But under the pressures of global economic competition, these systems are beginning to break up and become more complex. Individuals have to make many more choices than in the past. For many young people, finding an appropriate educational or career path is becoming harder. And adults are increasingly becoming aware that their hard-won skills will no longer last a lifetime, but will need to be regularly added to, and updated, in a process of lifelong learning. Good guidance is becoming more important for everyone.

In 1993, the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) initiated a pioneering type of study under the heading "What Works in Innovation". The aim is to produce rapid self-contained studies which provide a focused, policy-oriented assessment of an area of education where innovations are taking place. The first study in this series, *School: A Matter of Choice*, was published in 1994, and the second, *Schools Under Scrutiny*, was published in 1995.

This report, the third in the series, focuses on current issues in educational and career guidance in seven OECD Member countries (Austria, Canada, Finland, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Scotland). The intention has not been to produce a technical report, nor an extensive review of research in this field, but – using a methodology based on direct information-gathering led by the CERI Secretariat – to focus on key issues in educational and career guidance, examine how they are addressed in different countries, and offer recommendations as to how innovations might be built on, and practice improved.

Each country nominated an expert, who was asked to write a background document on policy and practice in his or her country, and to arrange a programme of appropriate interviews with policy makers and practitioners during a week-long OECD study visit.

The report was prepared by Caroline St John-Brooks of the CERI Secretariat, with the assistance of Mr. A.G. Watts, Director of the National Institute of Careers Education and Counselling in Cambridge, United Kingdom, who acted as consultant. It was made possible by the financial assistance, through voluntary contributions, of the Japanese Ministry of Education (Monbusho) and the Education and Industry Department of the Scottish Office (United Kingdom). It is published on the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The analysis which follows is based on background reports prepared by experts from the seven participating countries, on visits to the countries which were carried out by the OECD Secretariat or the consultant to the study, and on previous OECD reports and other research literature. The experts were: Professor Erwin Kämmerer of the Pädagogisches Institut des Bundes in Graz (Austria); Mr. Stuart Conger of the Career Development Foundation, and Dr. Ralph Kellett of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (Canada); Ms. Anneli Tallqvist of the Arbetsministeriet and Mr. Erkki Merimaa of the National Board of Education in Helsinki (Finland); Ms. Chiara Macconi, Inspector for the Ministry of Education (Italy); Dr. Agnes Watanabe of the Meiji Gakuin University (Japan); Dr. Karen Kovacs, independent education consultant (Mexico); and Professor John MacBeath of the Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde (Scotland).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The relationship between education and employment in OECD countries is currently undergoing profound change. In the past, most transitions between different levels of education, or between education and work, happened more or less automatically, as individuals moved en masse from one system to another. But under current socio-economic pressures, these systems are fragmenting and breaking down, and the interface between them is much less clear.

This means that educational and career guidance are now becoming much more important, as people try to navigate their way through unique personal careers which are likely to include periods of conventional work, education, training, self-employment and, perhaps, unemployment.

Until recently, most policy makers have seen educational and career guidance mainly as a way of improving the "fit" between the skills and aspirations of individuals entering the labour market, and the jobs and occupations available to them. But with the revolution currently taking place in the nature of work, this looks like an increasingly simple-minded model. Many individuals will find that the skills they acquired during their initial education will no longer last them a lifetime. Instead of making one key transition from education to work, they are more likely to find that life has become a seamless process of education, training and work – not necessarily in that order.

As lifelong learning becomes not just desirable but essential, high quality educational and career guidance will become equally essential, as a way of negotiating a pathway through the many choices on offer.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report looks at educational and career guidance in seven OECD countries: Austria, Canada, Finland, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Scotland. Its objective is not to categorise or exhaustively analyse each country's policies and practices, but to look broadly at the various approaches of the participating countries and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. A key aim is to draw out examples of good practice and innovation which might be of use to policy makers in other countries.

Overall, the report explores the role that educational and career guidance currently plays – and the much-enhanced role it might play in the future – in smoothing transitions between education and work. Part I of the report, which is divided into four chapters, focuses on this issue. It identifies different types of guidance and the purposes they fulfil, drawing on evidence from the participating countries and from other OECD research.

Part II consists of seven sections summarising policies and practice in the seven participating countries. Each country summary includes two or three case studies[1] demonstrating innovative approaches to educational or career guidance in different settings (which may be a school, a university, a career information office, an employment centre or a community project).

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

It is clear from looking at the policies of some OECD Member countries that the importance of educational and career guidance is becoming more widely recognised – as young people and adults have to make increasingly complex choices among a range of educational and occupational options.

Chapter 1 defines educational and career guidance as embracing three key elements: *educational guidance* (which concerns a young person's academic progress and such elements as the acquisition of good study habits, tackling learning difficulties effectively, choosing certain subjects or pathways, or making decisions as to what type of school to attend); *career guidance* (which focuses on understanding the world of work, choice of occupation, and smoothing the transition from school to employment); and *personal and social guidance* (involving issues which may be emotional – such as family problems – or practical – such as financial difficulties). This chapter focuses on the availability of such guidance in OECD countries, and looks at the training and professional identity of career counsellors.

Chapter 2 highlights the role of educational and career guidance in helping young people to understand themselves, their abilities and their aspirations, and to make independent choices. It focuses in particular on transitions – moving from level to level within education, and from education into work. Such transitions, which used to be characterised by whole cohorts of young people moving from one system to another, are now becoming more complex and personalised, as individuals increasingly choose their own pathways through a wide range of options.

The labour market in all OECD Member countries is changing rapidly, as global competition means that more skilled and knowledgeable workers are needed. At the same time, many companies are reducing the size of their core staff, preferring to employ temporary and contract workers. Individuals are less likely to remain in one occupation for life, but will in the future need to create their own careers, exploiting their personal "portfolio" of skills. Chapter 3 explores the role that educational and career guidance ought to play in the active labour market policies of Member countries, and in enabling young people to handle the changing world of employment in a constructive manner.

The concluding discussion in Chapter 4 focuses on the emergence of lifelong learning as a dominant educational and economic theme. The old single transition from education to work is likely to be replaced by a whole series of transitions, as individuals seek to update their skills throughout their working life, and move to and fro between education, training and work. The idea of continuous learning in a flexible labour market has profound implications for educational and career guidance, and this chapter draws out some of the policy steps which should be considered by OECD Member countries, if their guidance systems are to rise to this challenge.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Four key messages emerge from the research. If educational and career guidance is to fulfil its potential in easing transitions, improving the workings of the labour market, and enabling individuals to live more satisfying and productive lives, most countries need to improve their systems in the following ways:

- There is much good practice in all countries, but incoherent or incomplete systems tend to be the norm. Large numbers of young people and adults who could benefit from career guidance have to go without, or receive an inadequate service. ***Governments should set up audits of their own systems, with the aim of recording what is already in place – both within educational institutions and outside – and identifying gaps in provision. Improving coherence and comprehensiveness may well entail increasing the number of trained guidance workers.***
- In many countries there is a general dearth of good guidance materials for the use of teachers, counsellors and other guidance workers. This lack is particularly important when many workers in the field lack specialist training, and when clients are sometimes undecided, poorly motivated, newly-arrived in the country, or have other special needs. ***Governments could have a highly positive effect for relatively little financial outlay by sponsoring high-quality training packages, guidance materials and computer software, and could learn much from each other in this respect.***
- An effective system should offer educational and career guidance to everyone – from their early teens until well into adulthood – as an integral part of their education or training curriculum, rather than restricting it to transition points or to individuals with problems. ***Encouraging self-reliance and autonomous decision-making at an early stage in an individual's development can make for cost-effectiveness later on, enabling more people to***

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take responsibility for their own choices, and freeing trained and expensive guidance counsellors to focus more of their attention on the most difficult cases and situations.

- Access to information and to guidance is a real problem in many countries, especially for individuals who are no longer in education or training. ***Innovative methods of delivering information, especially using computer-based technologies, should be developed, and new ways of offering guidance – perhaps in public libraries, shopping centres, or through the use of "Careers Hotlines" – should be explored. Outreach techniques using youth workers or peer counsellors, or unusual approaches such as briefing parents or other members of the community who can then pass on their knowledge, could be more widely used.***

For an expanded version of these implications for policy makers, please see Chapter 4.

Part I

THEMATIC DISCUSSION

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER GUIDANCE?

INTRODUCTION

Profound changes are currently taking place in OECD countries, affecting all levels of society and the economy. As global competition and the effects of new technology rapidly change the nature of work, millions of individual workers in Member countries are discovering that they need skills of a much higher level than in the past – or that the skills they do have are obsolete. At the same time, employers complain that education and training systems are not producing people with the flexible competencies they require, and increased demands are being placed on education and training systems in many countries. Governments are beginning to understand the necessity for lifelong learning for all their citizens – but have not yet worked out how to go about it.

These developments mean that individuals' decisions as to how to prepare themselves for current and future forms of employment are becoming more and more crucial. Education and training programmes are becoming more numerous, specific and diversified, and the jobs on offer tend to be more specialised and short-term, and less secure.

As these complexities multiply, employers in many countries are finding it hard to come to terms with change, to identify their needs, and to make the most of their workforces. At the same time, policy makers cannot assume that the job market will automatically deliver the best possible match between supply and demand of skills and qualifications, or that individual choices can be left to chance. Every society needs to make the most productive use of the talents and abilities of its population, and the current upheavals are bringing home to policy makers the importance of the links between education, training and employment.

But education, training and employment systems have grown up over decades, and often embody different aims, values and internal cultures. When they have to interact, mismatches, gaps and inefficiencies occur. And as a result of changes in all three spheres, many young people and adults are now faced with a series of confusing but significant choices on which their future financial well-being is likely to depend.

One way in which such dislocations could be reduced would be to pay a great deal more attention to the guidance given to young people and adults who are making decisions about their futures. Of course, even the best guidance cannot solve all employment problems, but educational and career guidance, rather than being a direct policy instrument, can act as an effective "lubricant" of labour market policies (Watts, 1991) – as well as enabling individuals to make the best use of their talents and interests and live more satisfying lives.

Yet in most OECD Member countries, policy makers have been slow to recognise the significant contribution that effective educational and career guidance could make to economic regeneration and social well-being. Indeed, public opinion is well ahead of them. A recent survey carried out by OECD shows that the public sees careers advice and guidance as one of the most essential roles of the school (see Chapter 2, Section "Who gains from career guidance"). And OECD labour market researchers have noted that expensive training can be wasted if it is not well-targeted and accompanied by appropriate counselling (see Chapter 3, Section "Change in the labour market"). Career guidance may be a neglected area, but it is poised to become a significant element in the active labour market policies of OECD countries.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report examines the educational and career guidance which is offered to young people in seven OECD countries: Austria, Canada, Finland, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Scotland. Both the education and employment systems of these countries, and the national cultures in which they are embedded, are very different. This makes direct comparisons hazardous, but many of the challenges and problems which they face are the same. The career guidance arrangements of all these countries show examples of excellent practice and creative innovation – and areas of incoherence and neglect. The aim of this study is not rigidly to classify their different approaches, but to try and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each, in the hope that they – and policy makers in other countries too – can learn productively from each other.

The study looks at the way in which the seven countries organise their educational and career guidance systems for young people who are making choices about their education, vocational training, and future career. It highlights new developments which aim to meet the demands of the young people concerned and a fast-changing labour market, and it focuses mainly on three key transition points: between school and work, between school and tertiary education or vocational training, and between tertiary[2] education and work.

However, although this report focuses on young people up to the age of 25 or so, they are not the only group who would benefit from greatly improved educational and career guidance; more and more adults in OECD Member countries are losing their jobs, shifting occupations, becoming freelance or self-employed, and looking to upgrade their skills or redirect their careers. This represents a profound social change, since it suggests that everyone can – indeed should – continue learning throughout their lives, thus blurring the distinction between "young person" and "adult". Now adults too must keep moving, in order to respond to new economic and social demands. Governments are beginning to think in terms of lifelong learning for all – a policy which entails a new way of looking at the overall careers of individuals and which, to be successful, depends upon a free flow of information about opportunities in education, training and employment and good advice on how to choose amongst them.

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER GUIDANCE?

"Guidance" has been widely – although not universally – adopted as the generic term in English for offering a range of advice, counselling and information. Shertzer and Stone (1981) noted that "As an education construct, it refers to the provision of experiences that help pupils to understand themselves, and as a programme, it refers to procedures and processes organised to achieve certain educational and personal goals ( ) Guidance is the process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world".

More recently, Gysbers and Henderson (1988) have argued that a school-based programme of educational and career guidance should be made up of four components: a curriculum element; attention to individual planning; responsive services (aimed at providing special help for students facing problems); and system support (*i.e.* activities which support the other three components, and activities carried out by guidance staff which support and link with other educational programmes).

Educational and career guidance does not of course have to be based in educational institutions. The term covers a wide range of support and advice offered to young people and adults to help them to get the most out of their education – choosing appropriate programmes and courses, learning how to study effectively, overcoming setbacks – and to enable them both to make informed and realistic decisions about vocational training, jobs and occupations, and to put these into practice.

Especially in an international multilingual context, it can be hard to reach a consensus as to exactly what is meant by words such as "guidance", "counselling", or "orientation", but career guidance services normally embrace three distinct elements:

- ***educational guidance,*** which concerns the intellectual development of an individual, helping him or her to acquire good study habits, for example, to choose suitable subjects or pathways, to decide on what kind of school to go to, or to tackle learning difficulties effectively;

- **career guidance**,[3] which focuses on occupational aspirations, helps in the choosing of an appropriate work role, may include job placement, and generally eases the transition from education or training to working life;
- **personal and social guidance**, which deals with issues which may be emotional or psychological (such as family difficulties or behaviour problems) or practical (for example, accommodation advice, financial support or legal questions).

These three elements may of course be interwoven. For example, dealing effectively with personal problems may improve a student's capacity for learning, and ability to plan his or her own future with confidence; while educational decisions made at an earlier stage in an individual's school career may influence or even dictate his or her choice of occupation.

This study, though, focuses mainly on educational and career guidance,[4] bringing in personal and social guidance issues where appropriate. In some countries in the study (Austria, Japan, Mexico, Scotland), guidance workers often counsel young people in all three aspects, but in others (Canada, Finland, Italy) one or more aspects are normally kept separate.

WHO RECEIVES EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER GUIDANCE?

By and large, educational guidance is offered much more often to young people than to adults, normally within educational institutions but sometimes by other agencies. Career guidance is offered in a very wide variety of settings (schools, colleges and universities, training centres, job centres, in the workplace and through agencies of various kinds) as a service to both young people and adults. But it is becoming clear that many adults too could benefit from educational guidance, and that for many young people career guidance[5] could usefully start much earlier than is currently the case. In the most effective systems, educational guidance merges with career guidance as the young person or adult decides which subjects, programmes or courses to study in order to achieve qualifications which will lead to his or her desired occupation.

In spite of the many different forms of advice and guidance which are on offer, very many young people (and adults too) rely on informal sources of help when making career decisions. Parents, friends, neighbours, peers – all may be much more influential than the careers centre down the road. In the past, in stable communities and during periods of full employment, this approach may have been quite adequate. But in the current climate of rapid change and structural unemployment, it can unfairly limit individuals' life chances, and this is particularly true of disadvantaged or marginalised young people, who may be cut off from more informed and objective sources of guidance.[6]

It is in relation to these individuals that good guidance has, potentially, a particularly valuable role to play in terms of their access to education and training, or to the labour market. Effective educational and career guidance can improve equity in relation to race, gender or socio-economic background – but only if it focuses quite clearly on this aim. There is always a danger that poorly-trained or unreflective guidance workers will simply reinforce damaging stereotypes. If marginalised individuals are to be reached, new approaches may be needed such as peer counselling, or (for example) offering intensive briefing sessions for parents, community workers, youth club leaders or librarians.

A key function of the whole concept of "guidance" is the idea that clients – of whatever age – should be helped to take responsibility for their own futures, learning how to make choices and decisions on the basis of their understanding of themselves, and the information they are given. The aim of the best guidance is not simply to get an individual safely settled in a suitable job or educational programme (as was often the case in the past), but also to foster the development of skills for the future. Traditionally, the main responsibility of the professional counsellor is to the client and his or her needs – though this is not always as simple as it sounds. Clients have a right to independent and unbiased guidance from their counsellors, but this can result in conflicts of interest (for example, when the school which employs the guidance teacher is competing for custom with other institutions, or where a government has a political interest in the success of a particular high-profile labour market policy).

WHO OFFERS EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER GUIDANCE?

In virtually all OECD Member countries, responsibility for career guidance is divided between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour or Employment.[7] With adequate planning and liaison, this can work well – but it can also lead to wasteful duplication and a degree of incoherence in the service. The fact that Austria has two "Education Ministries" (the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Research, Science and Arts) creates an extra challenge for that country's guidance policies.

Education, even when there is a central Education Ministry, is often locally administered by states, provinces, municipalities or other local authorities. Several OECD Member countries which have hitherto had a centralised system (such as Denmark, Finland, France, Mexico, Spain, and Sweden), have recently devolved the administration of education in order to give the local state more autonomy. England and Wales are unusual in having reduced the power of local education authorities during the 1980s – by increasing the degree of centralised policy making while at the same time giving more autonomy to schools and other educational institutions. Scotland is due to follow suit in 1996.

In some federal nations, such as the United States, Mexico and Spain (the last two of which are still in the process of decentralising), the Ministry or Federal Department of Education retains some influence over education policy in the component states. But in others, like Germany and Canada, there is no federal Ministry for Education, and policy is wholly in the hands of the states – although the ministers of education for the 16 German *Länder* do meet regularly as an influential committee. Budgetary problems in the United States are leading some Republicans to recommend a similar model, which would dispense with the Federal Department of Education.

On the other hand, Ministries of Labour or Employment usually operate through centralised structures, although the administration of local institutions such as job centres may be decentralised – as it is in Italy. An exception is the United Kingdom, where local labour market policy including job training has been put in the hands of the Training and Enterprise Councils (or, in Scotland, Local Enterprise Companies). These are mainly composed of appointees from local industry, usually with some representatives from education and the surrounding community as well.

Such very different arrangements for putting education and labour policies into action have a crucial effect on how career guidance is delivered, since it tends to exist on a continuum, as it were, from education (whether based in school or elsewhere) through training to employment. Those responsible for planning and administering education and labour policies do not always have the same aims in mind, and often come from very different cultures. Crudely speaking, educators tend to focus on the needs and development of the individual, labour authorities rather look to the needs of local employers, the labour market and the economy as a whole.[8]

In the past, these differing preoccupations have sometimes been seen as mutually exclusive, with educationists resisting the idea that they are educating young people for an economic role, and the employment authorities, mainly focused on job placement, exhibiting irritation and frustration at the apparent inability of the education system to turn out people with the kinds of skills they believe the economy needs. Such problems are less acute in countries which have a strong tradition of social partnership – for example, in Germany and Austria, where the two "sides" of industry have a great deal of experience in working productively together. In less coherent systems, the different emphases of educational and career guidance seem to have been institutionalised through the division between Education and Labour Ministries – with vocational training sometimes falling uneasily between them.

The ambiguous position of career guidance means that in most OECD countries it tends to be offered by three different types of institution, all of which have characteristic strengths and weaknesses:

- *educational institutions*: the overwhelming strength of using schools and colleges as the main suppliers of guidance is that teachers and school counsellors know and understand the young people they are advising and have a thorough knowledge of educational options; the most important weaknesses are that teachers may have low expectations or fixed ideas concerning some individuals' abilities or attitudes, they are rarely familiar with the needs of the labour market, and they cannot normally advise young people who have already left school;
- *labour-market organisations*: the key strength of this approach (which may be government-administered in training or employment centres, or run by employers or unions on the social partners model) is that guidance is available to young people who have left school, and the advisers are in close contact with the labour market; the main weakness is that advisers' knowledge of educational options is often limited, and too much emphasis on job placement and the interests of employers can mean that not enough attention is paid to the individual's needs and aptitudes, with the result that – especially in the case of young people – the training or job placement may not be appropriate;
- *agencies (whether public or private)*: the advantage of this approach is that such agencies can liaise between educational institutions and employers, and can also offer guidance to young people who have left the system. Since they are detached from both the schools and colleges (who might be trying to maximise student numbers in their own interests) and the employers (who might merely be looking for cheap labour), the client may have a better chance of getting unbiased advice. This category excludes commercial job-placement agencies, which do not normally offer guidance. The main weakness of this approach is that it can lead to duplication and inefficiency. And although some private agencies offer a good service, there is no guarantee that the customer is getting value for money. What's more, if they operate on the basis of charging the individual, families without sufficient funds may be excluded from this avenue of assistance.

Unsurprisingly, given such a plethora of delivery mechanisms, the key characteristic of most national guidance systems is incoherence, gaps and unnecessary overlap – or even a lack of any real system at all. More effective planning and liaison are without doubt part of the solution, but this can be difficult in some countries because of the different cultures of educational institutions and those working in the labour market. Such measures are also time-consuming, and therefore expensive in the short-term – and in many countries the funding for guidance is currently being reduced in line with other cuts in public spending. Yet, good career guidance can benefit individuals, employers, education and training providers and governments alike. If it is to be as useful as it certainly could be, these divisions in practice, values and approaches need to be overcome.

THE GUIDANCE PROFESSION

Training and qualifications

In most countries, educational and career guidance starts around the age of 13 or 14, before the entry into upper secondary school. Learning about jobs and careers does sometimes take place in primary schools or even at kindergarten level, but this is not usually formalised and never compulsory (although Scottish primary schools are encouraged by the national curriculum guidelines to emphasise skills and attitudes which are relevant to pupils' future working life). Most of the people who carry out educational and career guidance are to be found in secondary schools or other educational institutions, in private or public agencies, in employment centres, or in other organisations – including companies and corporations.

Educational and career guidance in secondary schools normally follows one of two main models:

- Guidance may be carried out by mainstream teachers who combine their guidance work with normal subject teaching and may or may not have had some specialist training. This approach is often based on a "home room" or "tutor group" arrangement, in which a teacher is responsible for the welfare and educational guidance of a particular group of children for the whole school year – and sometimes throughout their school career. Normally, these home room tutors (who represent the school's "first line" guidance system) can refer children with serious problems to more specialised guidance teachers within the school (the "second line" system). Austria, Finland, Italy, Japan and Scotland are examples of countries using this approach.

  This model may be combined with the use of resources from outside the school. For example, in Finland, school counsellors sometimes ask the vocational guidance psychologists from the employment offices to advise particular pupils regarding their careers. In Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom, much career guidance in the schools is undertaken by a specialist careers service[9] run – until recently – by the local education authority. As well as working with young people who have left school, career officers liaise with guidance teachers and visit schools to interview students, take classes, or run career evenings for parents.[10]

- The second model is to have specialist counsellors (often with a psychological training) based in the schools. Normally, they do not teach – except in those schools or systems in which educational and career guidance is part of the compulsory curriculum; but they may organise workshops and programmes relating to various aspects of personal development, including educational guidance and preparation for the world of work. In Canada and Mexico this is the prevailing model.

The qualifications of guidance workers and counsellors vary a great deal from country to country and within countries too, and may depend on the setting in which they are working. In Finland, for example, guidance staff are very highly-qualified by international standards. Student counsellors in the comprehensive schools are normally experienced and fully-trained teachers with one year of specialist training. Finnish psychologists who offer vocational guidance in employment centres have spent six years qualifying in psychology, followed by a specialist course lasting about three months. In Italy, on the other hand, there are no officially recognised qualifications in guidance or counselling – whether educational or career-oriented. Anyone can set up as a counsellor, and students are often receiving guidance of all kinds from teachers and other counsellors who have no specialist training or qualifications.

Only in Finland, and in two Canadian provinces (Alberta and French-speaking Quebec), is specialist training compulsory before an individual is allowed to offer educational or career guidance in schools. In Austria, and in the rest of Canada, most guidance teachers have some sort of specialist training as well as their teaching qualification, but it is not compulsory, and some have none; although in all of these countries the aim is to move towards a recognised qualification for every guidance teacher. About half the counsellors in Canadian secondary schools do have masters' degrees in counselling or a related area, but these programmes normally focus on personal and social counselling rather than on educational or career guidance. According to Conger (1995): "Most students who currently receive career counselling get it from persons with little training in the process". This is also true of school-based guidance in Scotland, where only about one in three guidance teachers have undergone extra training, sometimes of the most minimal nature.

Appropriate training is equally important for the career guidance services based in job centres or employment bureaux if they are to play a real part in active labour market policies. The importance of their job is sometimes not adequately recognised, but a job description published by the Institute of Careers Guidance, based in the United Kingdom, makes it clear that this is a demanding occupation. "Career advisers handle, and make available to clients, massive amounts of occupational and labour market information. Much of this is obtained through local and first-hand contact with employers, colleges and other training providers (...). Advisers also maintain networks with other professionals including, for example, social workers, educational psychologists, youth workers and probation officers. Relevant and essential information for career advisers includes occupational knowledge covering all careers; a working knowledge of employment legislation and of the education system, the structure of schools and colleges, academic and vocational qualifications, the many initiatives affecting training and education, the benefits system and equal opportunity legislation" (Institute of Careers Guidance, no publication date).

Yet in many Member countries the careers services administered by the labour authorities are even less well served than the schools in terms of specialist training – although here too there are wide variations. For example, in Japan, which has a rather weakly professionalised service, officials working in the Labour Ministry's employment centres are administrators whose main function is job placement rather than guidance or counselling (*i.e.* encouraging young people to identify their strengths, weaknesses and aspirations and to choose an occupation).[11] In Italy, too, the employment offices are only responsible for placement, not guidance, and most officials have minimum qualifications. Conversely, career officers with the Scottish careers service must normally be graduates, and new entrants should have a postgraduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling, or be working towards it. In Canada, counsellors in employment centres who have taken the four available courses in Employment Counselling are among the most thoroughly trained career guidance workers in the country. In Finland, a specialist qualification is mandatory.

Different systems reflect rather different approaches to the use of psychologists. In some countries, the use of psychologists and psychological techniques such as psychometric testing is widespread and generally accepted. In Finland, psychologists routinely staff the employment centres. In Italy, parents commonly bring their teenage children – especially before choosing an upper secondary school – to psychological services run by the universities, in order to identify their interests and aptitudes through tests, and discuss their future. Some Mexican schools have large guidance departments entirely staffed by psychologists, which play an important role in the life of the school – running career guidance courses and putting on seminars, workshops and exhibitions, as well as offering one-to-one counselling for individuals. But in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, for example, educational psychologists tend to be associated with emotional or behavioural problems, special needs and emergency help – and consulting one often has an element of stigma attached.[12]

In most of the countries which took part in this study, training in guidance is patchy and inadequate. The setting up of professional standards, uniting all the different fields in which guidance takes place and establishing key levels of qualification (as other professions do) would do much to raise standards of practice, and also to conceptualise the career counsellor's task more fully and precisely. Such a development ought also raise the general level of understanding and awareness of the role that effective guidance can play in a modern economy.

Professional identity

The fact that effective training for career counsellors is so variable in most OECD countries, and that guidance takes place in so many different settings, results in a weak professional identity – which perhaps partly explains why recognition of the importance of educational and career guidance has been so long in coming. In the schools, those teachers who take responsibility for educational and career guidance are often seen as somewhat marginal to the rest of the teaching profession; their contribution to successful learning and the ethos of the school in general is not always recognised.[13] Similarly, career counsellors are not well integrated with the rest of the counselling profession, which generally prefers to focus on therapeutic issues – especially intense one-to-one counselling for emotional or behavioural difficulties. The relationship of career development to overall personal development does not seem to be well understood by mainstream counsellors with a background in psychology. So career guidance too often finds itself in the wilderness, seen neither as a *bone fide* educational activity, nor as "real" counselling, and lacking status in either field.

A particular problem for career guidance workers over the past 15 years or so has been, in many countries, a gradual politicisation of their work. Traditionally, the first loyalty of workers in the guidance profession is to the individual client and his or her development – but increasingly often they are being required to carry out government labour market policies under conditions of economic stringency. The role of career advisers will tend to be easier during periods of full employment than when levels of unemployment are high. In the latter case, guidance workers may have the unpalatable option of encouraging workers to compete for a small number of jobs in the knowledge that many will be rejected, or attempting to offer alternative ways of developing a satisfying life – which brings into question the work ethic which most governments want to encourage.

It is here that the notion of the client as self-directed chooser can be hard to square with labour market imperatives. Pryor (1991) suggests that "This policy challenge, for counsellors to find a balance between their responsibilities to individual clients on the one hand, and the social institutions which employ them on the other, looms as being crucial to the future of career guidance in most countries".

The policy challenge is for governments, too, and solving it is very much in their interests. They too need to find a balance between the efficient use of human capital, and the well-being of individuals. Indeed, unease over guidance workers' dual loyalties may explain why their profession has not performed a stronger role

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At the same time, policy makers may be tempted to exploit guidance workers' weak group identity by pressurising them to carry out certain employment policies without question. But in reality, governments are likely to get a better service from a strong, unified and well-qualified guidance profession which understands its role in fostering autonomous individuals who can make good decisions and put them into practice, and recognise the importance of continuing to learn throughout their lives.

There need not in reality be a conflict between the needs of individuals and the needs of economies. Education and business partnerships are growing in OECD countries, and work experience and work shadowing for school children and students are becoming common techniques for bridging the transition from education to work (see OECD, 1992). Modern enterprises are less likely to require workers who fit ready-made slots; they will have a better chance of thriving through giving opportunities to adaptable individuals who can continue to learn and progress. If lifelong learning is to become a reality, educational and career guidance will have to play a central role.

CAREER GUIDANCE AND TRANSITIONS

WHAT HAPPENS DURING CAREER GUIDANCE?

A large number of activities fall under the heading of educational and career guidance. The recent European Commission report "Educational and Vocational Guidance in the European Community" (Watts *et al.*, 1994) identifies nine different activities, all of which are elements of educational and career guidance and may take place in educational institutions, agencies or employment centres. These are:

- *information*: providing objective and factual data (about, for example, available subject options, education courses, training programmes, or job vacancies);
- *assessment*: making a diagnostic judgement about an individual's suitability for certain options, using formal or informal techniques (tests, examinations, interviews);
- *advice*: making suggestions based on the guidance worker's own knowledge and experience;
- *counselling*: helping individuals to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their situation, about the options open to them, and about the likely consequences of making different choices;
- *careers education*: providing a programme of planned experiences (which may include discussions, workshops on issues such as writing resumes, quizzes, role play, practice interviews, visits from outsiders or to local companies, work experience or work shadowing) which are designed to develop the skills, concepts and knowledge that will enable individuals to make appropriate career choices and successful transitions;
- *placement*: helping clients to achieve entry to a particular job or course of education or training, setting up work shadowing or work experience in different occupational settings;
- *advocacy*: negotiating directly with institutions on behalf of particular individuals – especially those who risk being excluded or who experience barriers in their attempts to get access to training or jobs;

- *feedback*: informing educational institutions and other training providers as to what kinds of courses and training programmes are needed by employers or individuals, but are not currently available;
- *follow-up*: contacting former clients to see what has happened to them, and if they need further help.

Countries vary a great deal as to the emphasis they place on these different activities. For example, *information-giving* is a very basic requirement, and career or job centres in most countries are strong here, but guidance based in schools can be very weak in this area. In Austria and Scotland, schools and colleges can usefully supplement their resources by using the Career Information Centres (BIZ) or the Scottish careers service respectively, both of which have strong information bases, including computer databases, and where staff are accustomed to using new technology. In more heterogeneous systems – like Italy and Mexico – information can be hard to track down. However, in Mexico City between May and August, when young people in transition are having to choose from a vast range of upper secondary schools, they can get information through a telephone hotline set up by the Secretariat of Education, or consult one of 16 mini-offices in the city.

Some countries (Austria, Scotland, Finland, some Canadian provinces) have built *careers education*, usually including an element of work experience, into the school curriculum in a systematic fashion, but in others it is much more haphazard and may depend on the particular school – or even an individual teacher or group of teachers. The degree to which careers education is integrated into the curriculum may depend on the availability of teaching materials, as much as on policy. *Job placement* in Austria, Italy, Japan and Mexico may only be carried out by Ministry of Labour Employment Centres (though in Japan, in spite of official structures, secondary school teachers often play a key role in arranging placements for their students). In Canada and Scotland other guidance agencies can perform this function, and often do.

The list cited above is not exhaustive: in fact, educational institutions often offer further activities as part of their developmental programme – making choices between different subject options, or learning study skills, for example – and these sometimes include aspects of personal and social guidance too. A further important role for counsellors or guidance teachers in schools is to ease the transition for newcomers between one level of schooling and another by offering programmes of preparation and induction, and liaising with other educational institutions.

GUIDANCE AS PART OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The most effective model of school-based guidance is likely to be a developmental model, which encourages young people to view themselves and their aspirations as objectively as possible, and then adds to this understanding specific information about the next stage into which they are about to move. Many countries have developed programmes of this type, but only in Austria, Finland, Mexico and some Canadian provinces are they compulsory. In Scotland, cross-curricular guidelines emphasise that young people have an entitlement to careers education, although the quality and quantity that they actually receive is very variable.

Normally, these programmes include a wide range of topics related to personal development. In Mexico, for example, a programme of *orientación educativa* was made compulsory in the lower secondary school in the 1994-95 school year. Areas of study include health education (including sexuality and drug issues), study skills, self-understanding, decision-making skills, and career guidance.

Another example of this approach is offered by the province of Alberta in Canada, which is currently overhauling its mandatory programmes. During 1995, the provincial co-ordinator for guidance and counselling field-tested a new planning guide for guidance and counselling services in the schools, designed to move provision from a "therapeutic model which delivers services to specific populations", to a "comprehensive model which delivers programmes and services to all the students within a school" (Alberta Education, 1995). The current restructuring of education in Alberta is seen as offering an opportunity to rethink what is offered, and affirm its value.

The new planning guide offers a number of examples of programmes for different levels of schooling. One, for instance, is for "Foothills Senior High School", a fictional urban school described as having generally high-achieving students, but with a particular group at risk of dropping out. The suggested programme has three main components: educational, personal/social and career. The first includes elements such as the development of study skills, planning for post-secondary education, and peer tutoring. The last includes career counselling, career planning, relating educational plans to career paths, the identification of skills, values and interests, the development of job search skills, a programme of visits and a Career Week, and a work experience programme.

Similarly, the United Kingdom's National Curriculum Council recommended in 1991 that secondary schools should offer their students: access to individual guidance; systematic careers programmes; direct experience of the world of work; access to up-to-date sources of information about educational, vocational, training and careers opportunities; the opportunity to compile and review a record of personal achievement; and the chance to draw up a personal action plan (National Curriculum Council, 1991).

CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE

In the past, most transitions between different levels of education, or between education and work, happened more-or-less automatically, as whole cohorts moved from one system to another. Guidance was only required if something went wrong with the process. But now these systems are fragmenting and breaking down, and the interface between them is much less clear. Educational and career guidance become much more important as people try to navigate their way through unique personal careers which are likely to include periods of conventional work, education, training, self-employment and, perhaps, unemployment.

Nevertheless, education systems still have key transition points when young people – and adults too – move from one level of education to another, or from education into working life. By and large, economists are most interested in the transition from education to work, and therefore in career guidance in the narrower sense. But often this transition has been influenced or even dictated by educational decisions made earlier in the system. For example, a young person who has not been selected for an academic scientific education has little chance of becoming a doctor; another who has opted at some stage for a relatively undemanding mathematics programme may find that he or she has difficulty in gaining entry to certain technical or vocational courses; giving up foreign languages too early may prevent a student from benefiting from work experience in another country; and so on.

Given that everyone develops different talents, enthusiasms and ambitions, and that the last two decades have seen a virtual explosion of knowledge and understanding, increased diversity in school curricula is inevitable. Young people who in previous generations would have left school in their early teens with very limited skills are now staying on to the end of upper secondary school or into tertiary education. For example, in 1992, 13 OECD Member countries had graduation rates from upper secondary school of 80 per cent or above (OECD, 1995a). The curriculum in many countries is being extended well beyond the traditional academic subjects in order to meet the needs of this group for a broad general education, sound vocational preparation and recognised qualifications. The result is that many young people have the responsibility for choosing programmes of study from the available curriculum, and it is important that they choose well from among the options open to them.

But at the same time everyone needs to be equipped with the general skills and values which are crucial for a productive and satisfying working life in the fast-changing world of work. The ideal remains that all students should follow a broad and balanced curriculum – but one which does not cut them off from the possibility of later choice, and which takes account of their individual strengths, interests and ambitions. Young people should not have doors closed to them as a result of making irreversible decisions when they are still relatively immature – yet an effective system should also avoid alienating pupils by forcing them to study subjects in which they have no interest or ability.

This is an inevitable tension in a world in which young people must be prepared for the future, when that future is hard to predict. Educational guidance has an important role to play in reconciling this conflict between a common core and necessary diversity, and in mediating the choices and decisions which must be made at key moments of transition – for example when students in some systems have completed the compulsory core curriculum which is universal for younger pupils, and are faced with the necessity of specialising in particular options or pathways. In many systems, of course, different routes are institutionalised in different types of school or college.

Much of the educational guidance in schools focuses on this choice function – though a distinction should be made between decisions which are made *for* the students, and those which are made *by* them. Clearly, in countries which have a selective secondary school system, decisions are often overtly made *for* the student, normally at the end of primary or lower secondary school. Such a decision may be based on a competitive process as in Japan or Mexico or in parts of the United Kingdom, where selection for élite upper secondary schools is carried out through a demanding written examination. In Germany, Austria and Italy, different types of secondary education leading to different types of career are recommended to ten-year-olds and their parents on the basis of the student's aptitudes and interests, and overall academic performance. In these cases, guidance may in effect be part of the selection system, encouraging young people and their families to accept what the system has decided.

Even when the final decision apparently rests with the young person and his or her parents, guidance may have an important steering function. In Finland, for example, young people have a very wide range of education and training options, and are encouraged to make independent choices according to their interests and aspirations. But hot competition to get into the most popular institutions means that some will have to rethink their ambitions, and here guidance has an important role to play in enabling them to make realistic decisions.

Not all systems have overt selection procedures. But they nearly all have points at which the tracks of different students diverge – usually into a university-bound route or a more vocational pathway. In Canada and the United States these "choices" occur on a characteristically individualistic basis. In certain countries (Germany, Austria, parts of the United Kingdom), a marked divergence takes place at the end of primary school. Although in theory there is a certain amount of choice in these systems, it is limited (often covertly) by the capacity of the most popular schools – which are often those offering a more academic education. In others (Japan, Mexico, Italy and France), selection takes place at the end of lower secondary. In Scotland, all children attend comprehensive schools from the age of eleven; but at 14, as well as continuing with a core curriculum, they choose from a range of subject options – a procedure which in most schools has the effect of separating high and low achievers. Watts *et al.* (1994) point out that crucial decisions about the future are often taken *for* the student when they involve "vertical" allocation (*i.e.*

between different levels of education), whereas choices about "horizontal" allocation (between different fields of study) are more likely to be made *by* the students, with or without guidance. Horizontal allocation, though, can also have a hierarchical effect – which the student making the choices may or may not be aware of.

TRANSITIONS FROM LEVEL TO LEVEL

Key transitions do not only involve choice: they represent growth and development, and often a compulsory shift from stage to another. For example, children moving from primary school to lower secondary undergo a distinct change in status. If the young person concerned is supported through this change by a well-thought-out guidance programme, the transition is more likely to be more successful. What's more, the student concerned is confirmed in his or her new identity, and develops a perspective on his or her own progress and development which can be built on in future years.

Preparation

Successful transitions normally involve two elements – preparation and induction – and different education systems emphasise different aspects. For example, in Scotland the transition between primary and secondary school at the age of 12 is seen as requiring special preparation, and the same is true in Finland for the move at the age of 13 from the lower stage of the comprehensive school to the upper stage. In most – but not all – of the Canadian provinces, the transition from elementary school to junior high school takes place at the age of about 12 (grade six), and from junior high to senior high at about 15 (grade 9), and these are seen as significant shifts in status which demand preparation.

In these countries, the teachers at the different levels of schooling often liaise with each other and devise a joint programme aimed at preparing pupils for the next step. Examples of such preparatory activities include:

- Secondary schools may organise open days for prospective pupils and their parents, or may allow them to visit at particular times to see the school at work.
- Primary school pupils in their final year may visit senior schools with their teachers and even take part in sample lessons – either as part of the process of choosing a school, or in order to experience a taste of life in the institution they are about to move into.
- First year secondary school students may put on a special presentation to welcome pupils visiting from their former primary school – some of whom they may already know.

- Guidance teachers from the senior school may visit potential pupils in their junior schools – sometimes accompanied by first year students who used to go to the same school and have successfully made the change – to tell them about the new school, answer questions, and allay any anxieties they may have.
- Booklets, brochures and prospectuses concerning the local secondary schools may be distributed to final year primary school pupils and their parents, and may be discussed by the staff of the primary school with the pupils in class, or at parent interviews.

The transfer from school to university or other form of tertiary education is another key transition in most countries – but the assistance offered to young people in preparing themselves varies widely. Universities in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom hold open days for prospective students, and in some institutions undergraduates are encouraged to write to newcomers before the start of their first term, offering advice on what to bring with them, and friendship (if only temporary) for the first few weeks. Some universities and colleges in Canada have a "buddy" system, in which established students befriend, inform and keep an eye on new arrivals.

In Italy and Austria, most students live at home, and such strategies are not seen as so important. Universities do liaise with the schools, though; lecturers visit upper secondary schools to describe and explain their institution and its various programmes to potential students – and to encourage students to choose their university. This is also true of some universities and colleges in Canada. In Mexico, many upper secondary schools are an integral part of a university, so school students may in effect already be part of the institution. Sometimes, the secondary schools are visited by representatives of the individual faculties of the university to explain their subjects and the structure of the university programme. This type of visit fulfils a dual guidance function – to smooth the transition for those who have already decided what to study, and to aid others in deciding.

Induction

In both Austria and Italy, however, where every graduate from upper secondary education has the right to a university place, there is a very high drop-out rate from tertiary education. Some university rectors believe that many students have not in fact made a positive commitment to the course they have "chosen", but are using the university as a breathing space or as an alternative to registering as unemployed – while they look for a job or otherwise decide what to do. This suggests that any educational or career guidance experienced by some of these students has not been very successful, or that those who needed guidance did not in fact receive it. This wasteful method of decision-making is certainly very expensive for the country, and suggests that there are deficiencies in both the quality and the quantity of guidance available.

Methods of induction – helping newcomers to settle in – vary not only from country to country, but from institution to institution. Many schools, colleges and universities publish booklets to guide new students and their parents, and they often begin the new academic year with a "welcome day" or "freshers' week" or other form of induction designed to introduce new arrivals to the institution and help them to feel at home in the new setting and begin to identify with it. Sometimes the new arrivals start term either earlier or later than the rest of the students, so that special attention can be paid to them.

At the school level, parents may be invited to take part in activities such as classroom visits, workshops and social events. These may be designed to impart specific information about the school and its teaching methods, with advice on how to support their children through their education, or may perform more of a social function to enable parents, too, to feel more at ease in the new setting. In some Mexican upper secondary schools, for example, parents are seen as important partners in the school's guidance programme, and are often invited to special conferences or events – such as the play one school put on which dramatised the problems of adolescence in a manner designed to increase parents' understanding of the difficulties of their offspring.

Universities in many countries do not have very elaborate induction procedures for new students, especially when the tradition is for young people to live at home with their parents while they are studying. But in Canada and the United Kingdom, where many students leave home for the first time to go to university in another part of the country, "freshers' weeks" or similar orientation periods are a popular institution. These tend to be a hectic round of activity held in the week before the autumn term officially begins, mainly run by the students themselves and aimed at getting new members for a plethora of clubs and societies, but guidance and careers services are well-represented among the stalls, and counsellors often give presentations explaining their work as part of a timetabled series of lectures and workshops provided for new students. In most British universities, students are allocated a key member of staff, often called a "director of studies" with whom to discuss academic and personal issues, but most of these are untrained in any form of guidance.

As with most forms of guidance, there is a very wide range of methods of carrying out induction activities. Some needs (especially relating to private problems) are best dealt with one-to-one; others can be addressed in small groups (often using active learning methods such as discussion, simulations and role play). The most economical way of disseminating some forms of uncontroversial information is in large groups or classes. The use of the peer group to communicate with newcomers is well-established in some systems, but probably not exploited systematically enough during these educational transitions, many institutions could benefit by exploring how best to use the energy and understanding of their own students, even with the youngest age groups.

THE TRANSITION TO WORK[14]

The *Employment Outlook* (OECD, 1996a) defines the school-to-work transition as: "the change in the major activities of young people from school-going to working/seeking work as they age. The transition period is the time interval during which a cohort of young people moves from near full enrolment in school to negligible enrolment, and from negligible labour market activity to high levels of labour market activity". The length of this period, the authors note, varies in relation to national patterns of education and training and, of course, to the availability of work. But in most OECD Member countries, it covers between 10 and 15 years (roughly from ages 16-18 to ages 25-30).

A successful move from education to work, like the earlier transitions, normally includes both preparation and induction, but these are more variable and complex, with various forms of vocational preparation and training often playing a key role. In advanced countries, this transition period is becoming ever more lengthy and complicated, often including alternating or mixed periods of training, work and unemployment. Both individual choice and the availability of opportunities become more important elements.

Moving from education or training into work can happen at a number of different ages and stages. In many countries, the most disadvantaged youngsters may drop out of school in their early teens, and moving into work may simply mean helping out in the market or on the farm, or selling chewing gum on a street corner. If they receive any guidance at all during this "transition", it is likely to be from family and friends – and the notion of choosing among different pathways hardly seems relevant. Unfortunately, those young people who are already the poorest tend to leave the education system first – even though their employment prospects are so doubtful – and move through a series of short-lived, unskilled jobs mixed with episodes of unemployment or self-employment.

For these youngsters, the most helpful intervention is often to try to keep them in school so that they can gain the qualifications they need for worthwhile jobs. In Canada, for example, the problem of drop-outs is seen as top priority, and there are a number of schemes designed to persuade them to stay at school for as long as possible. In Scotland, too, there is a great of anxiety about early leavers.[15] Once the compulsory school-leaving age has been reached, the key choice for a young person is whether to leave school and enter the labour market, or whether to improve his or her skills and qualifications in order to enter the market later but at a more advantageous point. Effective career guidance at this key juncture can make a big difference to the destiny of the individual (although it is made more difficult if damaging decisions have been made earlier in the young person's school career).

Austria's "dual system", which enables young people to work in companies as apprentices while receiving training in a specialist vocational school, has proved an extremely successful method of bridging the gap between school and work. But doubts have recently been expressed as to whether the training offered is of a high enough level to equip young people for an uncertain future, and whether the companies involved are offering a really broad and flexible preparation for working life. A new reformed version of the system, with a wide range of modules and pathways and a stronger college input, was due to start in 1996, but has been delayed as the result of financial cutbacks.

In Canada, the new "Youth Internship" (see case study) has much in common with the dual system, although young people who take part in it are not guaranteed a job with the company at the end of their training – and of course it is not yet widespread.

Work experience

A key development during the 1990s has been the growth of partnerships between schools and local companies, particularly in terms of providing work experience for young people in secondary school. Work experience usually lasts between three days and three weeks, except in the case of certain vocational courses where it may be longer. Normally, it, involves the young person carrying out tasks in a workplace, without being paid or actually employed there. Sometimes it is a bridge to a permanent job; sometimes work experience placements are used as "tasters" to give the student an idea of what a particular occupation is like; sometimes they are designed simply to communicate the experience of going to work.

In many OECD countries this is standard practice, although it is very rare in Japan. In Scotland and Finland it is now well-established for all secondary school students – as part of their general education and preparation for adult life. In Canada (where it is known as "co-operative education") and in Austria it more often plays a part in the vocational preparation of those young people who are not destined for higher education – indeed, work experience during the summer vacation is obligatory for students in Austrian vocational upper secondary schools. In Italy, unusually, high-flying students are those most likely to be offered work experience – as the result of collaboration between high schools and local industrialists, who tend to use it for selecting the cream of graduating students. Others may get it depending on the arrangements in place at their particular school. A particularly interesting development was European Work Experience, a scheme funded by the European Commission from 1989-1994, through which secondary school students on both general and vocational courses could gain work experience in another European country (see Griffiths *et al.*, 1992).

Other forms of introduction to the workplace include:

- *work shadowing*, in which students follow workers on a one-to-one basis throughout the day, observing the tasks they carry out, and the roles they play within the organisation;
- *mentoring*, an initiative which has proved very successful in the United Kingdom with ethnic minority students: successful professionals in the black community offer themselves as role models to young people still in education but in danger of faltering, offering them work experience and work shadowing, discussing their problems and ambitions, and taking an interest in their progress; mentoring is also useful in encouraging girls to aim higher or to enter non-traditional occupations, and is a technique which deserves to be more widely used;
- *work visits*, when groups of pupils visit a workplace either to watch what individuals are doing as they go about their work, or learn something about the processes or products of the organisation in question;
- *simulations*, which may involve games, role playing, and practice of various kinds, carried out on school premises but often in very realistic surroundings: sometimes students may act as receptionists for visitors to the school, or practise waiting at table in the college dining room;
- *mini-enterprises*, in which students start up small school-based companies, run them themselves, and try to make a profit;
- *work experience for teachers*, which is a particularly successful innovation in Austria – especially the province of Styria: teachers who have taken part in the scheme value not only the information they gain about the working world, but the experience of looking at education from another point of view.

GUIDANCE AT TERTIARY LEVEL

When it comes to third-level careers education and guidance, practice varies a great deal from country to country, as a result of the different approaches to education and training represented by universities and other institutions. Watts and Hawthorn (1992) identify four core functions of a careers service in a tertiary institution: as an information resource; as a source of specialist counselling expertise; as a placement service; and as an organiser of careers-related events, often with other institution. Both universities and technical and vocational colleges in the seven countries offer various combinations of educational and career guidance – but they tend to be more developed in the former (except in some Canadian provinces which have a strong tradition of comprehensive student services based in colleges). Most universities and third-level colleges have some sort of counselling arrangement for students with economic or personal difficulties, but these may be very limited – for example, a telephone line run by other students.

In countries such as Austria, Italy and Mexico, there sometimes tends to be an assumption that young people who have already chosen a clear vocational "strand" do not need career guidance – although they may need help with specific problems, and with finding a job in their field (an issue which is sometimes seen as the business of their teaching department). With the growth of modular curricula, and the necessity of choosing a personal "pathway" through a host of offerings, this attitude is gradually changing; where it is not, the unmet need for educational and career guidance is likely to become very visible in the future.

Universities in Canada and Scotland tend to have well-developed student support services of all kinds, perhaps since many of their students are living away from home for the first time. They typically offer career guidance and a job placement service, and a few have developed careers education programmes, often in collaboration with teaching departments. In Austria and Italy, students may not identify very strongly with their university or college – which may in any case be spread out on numerous sites throughout a city – and may tend to treat it as they did their school, simply attending lectures (many of which are given in very large classes without any personal attention) and depending on their family for support. In this type of system, career guidance within the institution may not be very well developed, and students rely on informal advice or information from local job centres.

Improved guidance could be an important strategy for improving the efficiency of these universities, and some universities in Italy are developing support systems, sometimes based on the Department of Psychology within the institution. Similarly, in Mexico, students studying on various social work courses may become involved in offering guidance. Peer tutoring, a scheme in which more experienced students, after a small amount of training, help those in difficulty – whether socially or academically – is also spreading in some countries. Some Italian universities use it, and in Canada it is widespread at all levels of the system.

THE CURRENT PICTURE

In the past, virtually all transitions took place en masse, as individuals moved from one system to another (with a certain amount of attrition on the way). But today these traditional systems are beginning to break down, not only under the impact of technological change and economic uncertainty, but also as a result of the growth in some countries of consumerist philosophies, which conceptualise education and training as matter of individual choice. (Although such a philosophy sometimes tends to shift ground when it comes to labour market imperatives, then, convictions concerning the needs and rights of the individual may give way to an emphasis on the requirements of the labour market.)

The seven countries featured in this study vary enormously in their approach to transition. Of course, their guidance systems – with their characteristic strengths and weaknesses – are closely related to their political, administrative and educational systems. So, for example:

- **Austria** has a well-organised, integrated education and training system with strong traditional transition points which needs to become more flexible and provide more alternative routes to meet new demands – and the same is true of guidance. Change is coming slowly, and there are already a number of tensions in the system.
- In **Canada,** which is completely decentralised so far as education is concerned and has a fast-changing population, transitions are very various. Some provinces exhibit strong examples of good practice – especially with regard to girls and women, native Canadians and newly-arrived immigrants – but there is enormous variability of standards across the country.
- **Finland** has until recently focused mainly on compulsory guidance classes as part of the school curriculum, preparing students for the traditional mass transition points, but now the system is moving to a more individualised approach under the impact of social and economic change.
- **Italian** governmental pronouncements with regard to guidance are humane and sophisticated, but putting them into practice is another matter; transitions are complex and sometimes inefficient, and there are large gaps in provision which are only partially filled by a plethora of local, voluntary and private agencies.
- In **Japan,** the development of career guidance is very closely related to current employment practices (whereby transitions are strongly mediated by institutions, and a specific occupation is often only decided upon after a young person has joined a company). It is still rooted in a competitive tradition which emphasises commercial tests used for selection purposes – in spite of the government's anxiety that individual development is being neglected.
- In **Mexico**, there is much lively and creative practice at the upper secondary level, and compulsory guidance programmes are becoming established in lower secondary schools, but the very large numbers of students in the schools can make it hard for individuals to get the attention they need when they need it. Unemployment and poverty in marginalised urban and rural areas make it hard for the young people who live there to make real choices.
- **Scotland's** well established and effective Career Advisory Service, which acts as a link between educational institutions and the labour market, is in the

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process of being privatised in line with United Kingdom government policy. This controversial step may well bear fruit, in that schools and other clients will have to think more clearly about what they want from the service and low-achievers may get a better deal than they have had hitherto.

WHO GAINS FROM CAREER GUIDANCE?

An effective career guidance system can bring benefits to many different agencies and groups in society:

- *governments*, because through appropriate guidance human resources can be used more efficiently;[16]
- *employers*, by helping them to find suitable workers, and by identifying the right training or other types of development for their existing employees (thereby improving both their skills and their motivation); discussing their requirements with the guidance services can also help employers to clarify their own needs;
- *schools, colleges, universities, and other providers of education and training*, because their programmes will become more effective if their students are enrolled on courses which genuinely meet their needs; drop-out rates can be reduced;
- *individuals*, by helping them to handle a wide range of educational and vocational possibilities, experience smooth transitions, and to make productive choices.

All these categories would also benefit from a further potentially valuable outcome from guidance: increased equity. Individuals who are disadvantaged (whether as a result of their ethnic background, their gender, their language or their socio-economic status) can, through effective guidance, identify educational, training and employment opportunities and begin to build constructive pathways for themselves. Unfortunately, those who have the greatest need for such interventions are, in most countries, those least likely to receive them. Innovative techniques (such as those described in some of the case studies) are required to reach out to such excluded individuals.

Public opinion in OECD countries clearly recognises the benefits of educational and career guidance, and strongly supports its existence in schools. A survey of public attitudes to education carried out in 12 countries for the INES project[17] showed that more than 80 per cent of the population of these countries thought that careers advice and guidance was an "essential" or "very important" role of the school. The highest degree of support came from the Austrians, who thought that this was the most important practice a school should emphasise; 93 per cent rated career guidance as "essential" or "very important (OECD, 1995*a*). The French ranked it very high too, and Scottish research shows that 89 per cent of both the public and the employers in Scotland believe it to be "essential" or "very important" (Scottish Office Education Department, 1995).

Nearly a decade ago, Walz argued that career guidance had "come of age". He saw in the professional literature a "widespread recognition of the importance of vocation in how people live and feel, and of the close relationship between career and life development. It has become increasingly clear that guidance must respond to the values, goals and beliefs of each individual (...). Perhaps most important is the recognition of the need for purposeful planning and individual responsibility in career development" (Walz, 1987).

Yet in spite of his optimistic words, in many countries these recognitions are only just beginning to move from the professional literature into the reality of policy. In the communiqué issued after the 26 OECD Education Ministers met in January 1996, all the ministers agreed that: "The development of career guidance counselling, especially for adults, should be a priority". Yet there is still a sense that career guidance is waiting in the wings; it remains relatively unexplored as a key national strategy for making educational and labour market policies more effective, improving the quality of life for individuals – especially those who risk exclusion – and enabling modern societies to move more smoothly towards an era of lifelong learning.

CHANGING NEEDS AS SYSTEMS CHANGE

CHANGES IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The labour market in all OECD Member countries is changing rapidly, as global competition means that more skilled and knowledgeable workers are needed, and, at the same time, people without the right skills are being excluded from the mainstream of economic life. As the OECD's 1995 *Employment Outlook* puts it: "Unemployment remains unacceptably high in many OECD countries and creates high costs in terms of the waste of human resources and associated poverty and social distress" (OECD, 1995*b*, page vii).

Companies – and whole industries – are having to change rapidly in order to adapt to new economic circumstances, and many are reducing their core staff and using a higher proportion of "flexible" workers, who may be part-time, temporary, self-employed, home-based or on fixed-term contracts. Such organisations, reduced to their core workers, are not only smaller but less hierarchical; and these flatter structures offer less opportunity for career progression of the old-fashioned kind. For the majority, life is becoming a series of job changes, learning new skills and reorienting their lifestyles. This is what Handy (1991) describes as the "portfolio" society, in which people are employed as the result of their personal portfolio of skills, developed over a lifetime.

Many of the jobs lost as a result of these changes are lost for ever; which means that not only new job skills, but the ability to adapt to new situations and learn new ways of working are now critically important. The OECD concluded that guidance should be an integral element in "active labour market policies"[18] (ALMPs) – which, according to the organisation, can "play a critical role in assisting the unemployed back into gainful employment and in improving the functioning of the labour market". The *Employment Outlook* (*op cit.*, p. xi) notes that: "Evaluations from France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States of targeted measures of *job-search assistance and counselling* which include formally scheduled interviews, back-to-work plans and job clubs, show consistently positive outcomes. Such measures are fairly simple to organise and not very costly, showing that good returns do not necessarily require large resources".

This finding relates to adults, but it suggests that effective career guidance could have an even more important role in assisting and developing young people at an earlier stage in their careers – before any difficulties become established and intractable. As the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation put it in 1993: "Appropriate career preparation and planning services can help young people avoid the jagged and costly employment/unemployment patterns that often accompany haphazard career planning."

In particular, it is becoming clear that training programmes and the public money invested in them can be wasted if they are not well-targeted. The authors of the *Employment Outlook* raise doubts as to whether training in itself has an ameliorative effect on unemployment, noting that: "The likelihood is that training programmes which are broadly targeted on the unemployed and for which little counselling is given will be ineffective, as evaluations in the Netherlands and the United States have shown" (*ibid.*).

So governments should now focus on the potential benefits of a properly developed guidance system. The *Employment Outlook* comments: "OECD studies of the Public Employment Service have found that the proportion of staff engaged in job counselling/assistance is low, about one in four. An hour of individual counselling per month for each unemployed person is a reasonable target. This implies that there should be at least one qualified counsellor for each 100 unemployed persons; very few countries currently meet this criterion. This, in fact, is the basis for current reforms in Switzerland and many other countries would do well to examine their staffing ratios, too" (*op.cit.*, p. viii). It is to be hoped that this recommendation will be taken to heart.

THE ROLE OF CAREER GUIDANCE IN NATIONAL ECONOMIES[19]

Career guidance can help labour markets to operate more efficiently by: *supporting the decisions of individuals* (through which the labour market operates); *reducing the degree of market failure*; and *contributing to institutional reforms* which are designed to improve the functioning of the labour market. According to the OECD's report published to support the 1996 Meeting of the Education Committee at Ministerial Level: "Good guidance can reduce unemployment by improving the fit between the knowledge and skills of individuals and the opportunities offered to them on the labour market. A further potential benefit is the upgrading of the skills and qualifications of the workforce – as the result of alerting them to education and training opportunities – and a consequent increase in job satisfaction and, possibly, a reduction of inequality of opportunity" (OECD, 1996*b*).

Supporting individual decisions

Most analyses of the labour market identify three main types of decision made by individuals in relation to their work:

- *labour supply decisions*. This is the type of decision made by workers as to whether to offer their labour and if so to what extent; the better their information is, the better the likely balance between supply of, and demand for, labour;
- *human capital decisions*. These relate to the amount of time and money individuals are prepared to invest in education and training; again, the better-informed people are, the more effective their investment decisions are likely to be. The current underinvestment by individuals in education and training might be reduced somewhat if they were more aware of the potential financial returns of different types of qualification;
- *job search decisions*. These concern which jobs should be applied for and which accepted; career guidance ought to increase the efficiency of this search by reducing both the costs of the search, and the degree to which individuals take unsuitable jobs.

Reducing market failure

Three different types of market failure ought to be particularly responsive to the positive effects of career guidance:

- *drop-outs from education and training*. Young people entering the job market are often criticised for having inadequate levels of skill and qualification – and many of these have difficulty finding jobs. For example, it is estimated that United Kingdom unemployment directly related to lack of qualification costs about £350 million a year; so if only 10 per cent of potential drop-outs were encouraged to stay in the system and gain qualifications, a saving of £35 million could be expected – as well as other social and personal benefits;
- *mismatch*. About one third of United Kingdom unemployment is thought to be a result of mismatches between supply and demand, especially with regard to an oversupply of manual workers; this is likely to be true of other OECD countries where unemployment persists;
- *discouraged workers* (i.e. those who would like a job, but have stopped looking for work because they do not think they have a chance of finding it). Guidance could reduce their numbers by extending their awareness of possible opportunities.

Contributing to institutional reforms

Career guidance can help to support reforms which are designed to improve the normal functioning of the labour market. Some examples are:

- *new institutions* can be designed to include guidance: for example, in England and Wales the careers service is recognised by local Training and Enterprise Councils as an integral element in planning effective training programmes – and the same is true of Scotland's Local Enterprise Companies;
- *new forms of qualification*: In the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, where vocational qualifications are being reconceptualised and restructured as a range of skills and competencies brought together in modular programmes, guidance services can help individuals adjust to these new structures;
- *open and flexible learning (OFL)*: recent research in the United Kingdom carried out by consultants Ernst and Young suggests that open and flexible learning can usefully replace some forms of traditional training for work, especially when upgrading skills rather than immediate job placement is the primary aim – and it can also be more cost-effective (Beaton, 1995). The report concludes that if such OFL programmes are to be successful, assessment and guidance is "an almost essential accompaniment".

CHANGES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The thrust of change is not just coming from alterations in the job market, however. Education is changing too. Although falling birthrates in the 1970s in many countries mean that there are now fewer young people reaching working age, both the threat of unemployment, and the fact that national and individual expectations are rising, mean that more and more young people in OECD Member countries are continuing their education and training well beyond compulsory schooling; at the same time there is increasing demand for workers who are both flexible and highly-skilled. These demands are leading to an ever-widening choice of possible educational and vocational pathways, a growth in modular programmes, and more distance and open learning.

This increase in flexibility means that qualifications, too, must become more flexible. Many countries are currently experimenting with various forms of credit accumulation and transfer, new ways of accrediting prior learning and experience, and new forms of assessment, so that individuals can collect a portfolio of skills. Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are all developing new vocational qualifications based on specific competencies and a number of other countries, including Mexico, are showing interest in this approach. Individuals who can prove their competence can be accredited, wherever they have learned their skills; it is not necessary to have followed a particular course. Conversely, simply having taken part in a specific programme will not deliver a qualification unless the student can show that he or she can perform at the required level. In Scotland, the new Scottish Vocational Qualification is based on this system, which is due to be extended to many professions – including guidance.

In Canada, some provincial guidance programmes require students to prepare their own portfolios as evidence of their skills, and as a basis for career planning. Currently used mainly as a guidance tool to give students self-confidence and encourage them to think about their own progress as learners, there is scope to develop them into permanent individual records of achievements, skills and qualifications, useful for entry to further education and employment alike. The National Record of Achievement (NRA) currently being developed in the United Kingdom has the potential to perform the same function. According to White *et al.* (1995), the NRA will provide a "coherent lifelong record of all academic, vocational, employment and personal achievements". As well as offering a permanent, consolidated record of an individual's achievement, it can act as a tool for action planning, which White *et al.* see as a key element in the process of developing "the self-motivated and autonomous learner".

Transition at a time of change

In this era of rapid change, the role of educational and career guidance begins to look central. *The OECD Jobs Study* (OECD, 1994) identifies the transition from school to work as one of three key problem areas in the education and training policies of OECD Member countries,[20] and recommends more effective career guidance at the end of secondary education (see Chapter 4). Without this input, young people can find it hard to identify suitable education or training programmes leading to useful qualifications, or job opportunities related to their skills. This can result in inappropriate decisions which waste scarce resources, result in a poorly-prepared workforce, and lead to personal frustration and unhappiness.

But for many young people, if guidance interventions are left until the end of secondary school, it will be too late. Guidance, in the sense of coming to understand one's strengths, weaknesses and aspirations, and relating these understandings and ambitions to the opportunities offered by the world of work, is a developmental process which ought to begin at the age of 13 or 14 – or even earlier. Trainee counsellors are encouraged to move from the concept of a "matching" model (which sees success as a process of placing individuals in appropriate jobs or training places) to a "developmental" model (which is aiming to develop self-directed individuals, equipped to continue learning in or out of the workplace, who take full responsibility for their own progress). Maybe policy makers should do the same.

The developmental model as an objective of successful career guidance is particularly significant because, in the future, this key education-to-work transition will for many people be one of many transitions between education, training and a job – as each individual's personal career changes and develops. As the structure of companies and enterprises becomes more flexible, employing more external workers with a portfolio of skills, who sell their services on a contractual basis, the range of choices available to individuals – and the complexity of those choices – will increase rapidly. Modern post-industrial societies are placing more and more emphasis on new forms of knowledge and understanding, and transferable skills – literacy, numeracy, and computer skills, the ability to communicate, problem-solving skills, and the capacity to work both autonomously and in teams. Change itself requires specific competencies, sometimes known as "transition skills", if it is to be negotiated successfully.

In the past, education and training normally came before employment, but increasingly often they are now weaving in and out of each other – indeed, transitions from work to education as well as in the opposite direction are likely to become more common. And if lifelong learning is to become a reality, good advice from counsellors who both understand the needs and aspirations of the individual and have accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the opportunities available in the worlds of work, education and training, will be increasingly necessary.

4

BEYOND SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION: LIFELONG LEARNING

CAREER GUIDANCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Until recently, many policy makers have seen educational and career guidance mainly as a way of improving the "fit" between the skills and aspirations of individuals entering the labour market, and the jobs and occupations available to them. But with the revolution currently taking place in the nature of work, this looks like an increasingly simple-minded model. While the demand for certain skills, from plumbing to medicine, looks likely to remain, many individuals will find that the skills acquired during their initial education will no longer last them a lifetime. Those who leave the education system with sound basic skills, and who are independent, motivated and adaptable, will have less difficulty than others in finding ways to survive economically in a rapidly changing world. But the main point is that individuals in the future are less likely to find themselves making a small number of key "transitions" – rather, life is likely to become a seamless process of education, training and work – not necessarily in that order. Lifelong learning will become not just desirable, but essential.

Indeed, Watts (1996) argues that the word "career" (in English, at any rate), is currently in the process of changing its meaning. "The new concept of career will be very different from the old", he writes. "The old concept meant an orderly progression up a hierarchical ladder within an organisation or profession. Our societies are (...) witnessing the death of career in this sense (...) 'Career' now needs to be defined not objectively but subjectively, describing an individual's lifetime of progression in learning and work. The career is now owned by the individual; it is a process, not a structure."

How can the opportunity to progress in this way and engage in lifelong learning be opened up to all, in economies which have their fair share of unemployment and disadvantage? Watts proposes four "ligatures" to bind education, training and employment more constructively together:

– stronger, more coherent financial support for individuals who are not currently employed;

- a more flexible and responsive learning system which mirrors the more flexible work system;
- a qualification and accreditation system which assesses and rewards individuals' learning not only within the education system but elsewhere;
- lifelong access to guidance: if individuals are genuinely to secure progression in their learning and work, guidance is crucial – it helps them to articulate their aims and aspirations, and it goes some way towards ensuring that their decisions are informed in relation to the needs of the labour market.

In the development of lifelong learning, then, career guidance is a crucial component, since a framework characterised by choice and individual pathways must entail accurate information and guidance in how to use it – if appropriate decisions are to be made. Effective guidance makes it easier for young people and adults alike to continue learning, by helping them to make good choices, and by smoothing all kinds of change and transition. In particular, it encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own careers – whether inside or outside the workplace.

A SUCCESSFUL MODEL FOR CAREER GUIDANCE?

If lifelong access to guidance is to become a reality, then governments need to set up effective systems for achieving it, or to improve and extend the mechanisms which are already in place. Of course, it is hard to say exactly "what works" in educational and career guidance – since the effects of particular policies are unlikely to show up for years. A key question for policy makers must be: Does an ideal model exist, or should every country evolve a different approach based on improving what is already in place?

Insofar as there is an ideal, most countries are now moving, at varying speeds, towards it – in the form of a developmental model of educational and career guidance. But the movement needs to be in two directions. As choices and pressures increase, individual guidance focused on the future – as well as one-to-one counselling for emotional, social, family or learning problems – will become ever more important. At the same time, though, some systems will need to move away from a focus on "crisis" counselling to a universal entitlement model, in which all young people (from the beginning of lower secondary school or even earlier) receive a well-planned developmental educational and career guidance programme integrated into their school curriculum, which, at the top end, operates in partnership with the world of work.

But the results of this study suggest that there can be no one organisational model, because political and administrative structures differ so widely. Career guidance in every system has evolved within that country's own national culture and educational traditions, and although broad economic trends affect everyone, each nation has certain areas of strength, and particular problems to solve. Countries aiming to improve their systems should start first by identifying their characteristic strengths, and building on them. Then they should develop an overall model of effective guidance – perhaps drawing on other countries' experiences – and work towards filling in the gaps.

There would be more evidence of what works, of course, if the evaluation of different national systems of guidance (or elements within those systems) was more widespread – but this seems to be the exception rather than the rule. The lack of research in this area is in itself a sign of the marginal status of educational and career guidance. Evaluative research projects are of course hard to set up in an area full of complex variables, where staff are already overstretched and funding is not easy to find. But a concerted effort should be made by Member countries to establish what counts as success in this field, and how it can best be replicated. In particular, pilot projects and other initiatives should not be set up unless evaluation is an integral part of the initial plan.

Career guidance itself can be evaluated to a certain extent in relation to successful job placement, or entry to an appropriate training course; but this is of course a relatively crude measure, and only one aspect of success. What's more, it is not always clear what role the guidance itself has had; other channels of information are influential too – as are external factors such as the state of the labour market – especially if a period of time has elapsed. But it should be possible to trace the progress of individuals through a chain of guidance interventions, and come to some conclusion as to how far these have contributed to a successful career outcome. And the views of clients are an essential element in any attempt to evaluate any guidance service – especially if they are young, poor, immigrants or otherwise disadvantaged.

Another key aim of guidance is to enable individuals to understand themselves and their aspirations more fully, and meet their own goals. This is not easy to assess either, although both attitude and degree of satisfaction can be explored through interviews and questionnaires. A combination of methods of investigation should enable the career guidance services themselves – and the governments which fund them – to judge how far they are successful and provide valuable feedback on what changes might be needed.

In spite of the absence of definitive evaluations, it is clear, judging by the overall picture, that enhanced educational and career guidance potentially has a strong role to play in OECD Member countries, particularly in terms of:

- upgrading the skills and qualifications of the workforce;
- increasing the motivation – and satisfaction – of students and workers and improving the choices that they make;

- reducing unemployment by enhancing the fit between the skills of individuals and the opportunities open to them through the labour market;
- improving the ethos of schools by encouraging a more reflective approach on the part of the students;
- reducing inequity, especially at the school level, and promoting inclusion;
- contributing to successful lifelong learning, by encouraging individuals to take hold of their careers and see them as a continuous process of development.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- There is much good practice in all countries, but incoherent or incomplete systems seem to be the norm. Large numbers of young people and adults who could benefit from career guidance have to go without, or receive an inadequate service. ***Governments should set up audits of their own systems, with the aim of recording what is already in place – both within educational institutions and outside – and identifying gaps in provision. Improving coherence and comprehensiveness may well entail increasing the number of trained guidance workers.***
- As is true of many aspects of education and training, those marginalised young people and adults who most need effective guidance often receive the least satisfactory service. ***Since auditing and improving current arrangements will take time, and given the almost universal emphasis on restraining public spending, governments should make serious efforts to target these groups immediately through outreach, mentoring and other techniques.***
- Although well-thought-out, coherent and comprehensive systems are essential for an effective service, no structure can guarantee that young people actually receive a good service at the level of the individual if practitioners are inadequately prepared. ***High quality training for practising counsellors, whether they are operating in the school, the employment centre, or the workplace, is essential.***
- In many countries, career guidance lacks established standards of practice, and a strong professional identity. ***Setting up professional standards, uniting the different fields in which educational and career guidance takes place and establishing key levels of qualification, would do much to improve practice, and also to clarify the career counsellor's task.***
- There is a general dearth of good guidance materials – a lack which is particularly important when many counsellors and guidance workers lack specialist training, and when clients are sometimes undecided, poorly moti-

vated, newly-arrived in the country, or have other special needs. ***Many governments could have a highly positive effect for little outlay by sponsoring high-quality training packages, guidance materials and computer software and could learn much from each other in this respect.***

- The value of educational and career guidance often goes unrecognised by policy makers, employers and by other professionals in the fields of education and counselling alike. This can result in poor understanding and commitment on the part of decision-makers and managers, and low status and morale among counsellors. ***Much could be achieved relatively cheaply: if all teacher training courses included a guidance element (which need not be extensive) to sensitise young teachers to the issues; if the role of career guidance were more frequently publicised and discussed and its importance to national economies recognised; and if the role of guidance workers – whether in schools, tertiary institutions, job centres or in the workplace – were publicly validated.***

- The typical division of responsibility between the education and the labour authorities currently risks duplication and conflicting agendas. There is every likelihood that this institutionalised division will continue to exist in Member countries – and in many ways it is desirable in the interests of responding to the needs of different clients, especially young adults who require several different access points. ***In order to get the best from a pluralist system, attention should be paid to greatly improved liaison between all guidance and counselling agencies especially at the local level, aimed at increased understanding, efficiency and clarity of purpose, and recognising the different interests involved.***

- The apparently disparate nature of the content of guidance programmes in educational institutions need not be a problem. Country experiences show that well-planned courses focusing on personal growth can comfortably include individual personal and social development, understanding of the world of work and the local community, work experience and even job placement. ***These seem to be most effective for young people when they are based in educational institutions, but extensive liaison with other agencies – especially those with detailed knowledge of the job market – is crucial. Distance or open learning could have a role to play for adults.***

- An effective system should offer educational and career guidance to everyone from their early teens as an integral part of their education or training curriculum – rather than restricting it to transition points or to individuals with problems. ***Encouraging self-reliance and autonomous decision-making at an early stage can make for cost-effectiveness later on, enabling more people to take responsibility for their own choices, and freeing***

guidance counsellors to focus more of their attention on the most difficult cases and situations.

- Access to information and to guidance is a real problem in many countries, especially for unemployed individuals who are no longer in education or training. ***Innovative methods of delivering information, especially using computer-based technologies, should be developed, and new ways of offering guidance – perhaps in public libraries, shopping centres, or through the use of "Careers Hotlines" – should be explored. Outreach techniques using youth workers or peer counsellors, or unusual approaches such as briefing parents or other members of the community who can then pass on their knowledge, should be more widely used. Innovations such as job clubs and back-to-work plans have had some success in some Member countries.***
- The marginal status of educational and career guidance is reflected in the lack of serious research work on what counts as success in each national context, and how it can best be replicated and disseminated. ***Evaluation should be taken more seriously and, in particular, procedures established which include feedback from clients of all ages. Schools should be encouraged to develop their own criteria in this area.***

Part II

COUNTRY SUMMARIES

AUSTRIA

Adding flexibility to traditional approaches

OVERVIEW

There is a long-established co-operative network of agencies offering educational and career guidance in Austria. In the schools, guidance is seen as an integrated whole: education is expected to develop the individual's understanding of the world of work, and give students information, confidence, self-reliance and decision-making skills. Relevant programmes are integrated into the lower secondary school curriculum, and schools also offer individual guidance to pupils who require it.

Specialist training is not compulsory for guidance teachers, but there is a wide range of in-service courses, and some are highly qualified. Others are not, however, and the degree of professionalisation varies a great deal from province to province. A particularly strong characteristic of the Austrian system is the involvement of the social partners – employers represented by local chambers of commerce, and employees represented by chambers of labour – in vocational guidance. There is a 40-year long tradition of co-operation between these groups.

Since effective career guidance is seen as one of Austria's key active labour market policies, local career information centres play an important role in advising young people. Most offer a wide range of information and a variety of facilities, as well as some guidance, but they are mostly aimed at relatively self-directed individuals. Young people who need more extensive help – especially those from ethnic minorities – may find it hard to locate, although it will certainly be available somewhere.

Although Austria has a well-established education and training system which once worked well, it is becoming dislocated under the pressure of economic and occupational change. After a long period of consensus and co-operation, economic retrenchment now means that conflicting interests are coming to the surface, especially in Austria's apprenticeship system (the famous "dual system"). When the future seemed certain, and pathways for young people were clear and relatively fixed, guidance was only necessary for those who had difficulty finding a route which conformed to what was on offer. But now that options are much more various and complex, there is a clear unmet demand for guidance, especially when it comes to choosing the right type of upper secondary education at the age of 14 or so. Drop-out rates from both vocational and higher education are high in comparison with other OECD countries, suggesting that relatively large numbers of young people are choosing unsuitable routes.

Currently, the system seems to be absorbing these difficulties, but such dislocations are wasteful and time-consuming, and can result in unnecessary stress and anxiety for young people and their families. Determined efforts have been made to develop more effective guidance services both in school and later on. The proposed reform of the dual system, and the establishment of new vocationally-oriented institutions (*Fachhochschule*) at the tertiary level – with new professional qualifications to match – could well point the way to the future. But it is too early to say if these steps have been enough to solve the problem.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

In Austria, there is a clear conceptual and administrative difference between educational guidance (which deals essentially with issues such as study skills, choice of school programmes, and learning difficulties) and vocational guidance (which focuses on career preparation and choice of occupation). In practice, of course, the two frequently overlap. Responsibility for educational guidance is shared by two Ministries: the Federal Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs, and the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts. Vocational guidance and information on jobs and careers is provided by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Educational guidance is enshrined in the School Organisation Act 1962, which set up the current education system. Under this act, Austria's school system is structured to form an integrated whole, and guidance is seen as an essential part of this system, since transitions between one type of school and another, and to higher education, are supposed to be open to all pupils. This means that "students and parents have to be informed about the tasks and requirements of different types of schools, and have to be guided and counselled on the student's future educational path".

The idea of preparing young people for the world of work has also been built into the Austrian system from the start. The 1962 Act stated that "Austrian schools (...) have to equip young people with the knowledge and the skills required in their future lives and careers". After the oil crisis of the mid 1970s, and the subsequent economic recession, attention was focused afresh on the importance of vocational preparation within a liberal education. Prevocational education became an integral part of liberal education, and vocational preparation and the introduction into the professional world developed into crucial prevocational tasks of schools that were offering a general education.

So educational and an introduction to the world of work are part of every school's mission; educational guidance is the responsibility of all school heads and all teachers. Form teachers (*Klassenvorstande*) are often approached by both pupils and parents for all kinds of guidance. Many schools also have specially trained counsellors, supported and co-ordinated by local departments for school psychology and educational guidance set up by the provincial school boards and the Vienna school board. These departments run seminars and annual conventions for guidance teachers, but are hard-pressed, since there are only 130 school psychologists in the country (*i.e.* one psychologist per 10 000 pupils). They are called upon by guidance teachers to deal with particular problems, and offer a free service to pupils who want to improve their study skills or need educational guidance of various kinds, and also to parents concerned about their children's future. The School Instruction Act (1974) stipulates that individual talks and joint consultations must be held between teachers, students and their parents concerning the best path for each student to take.

The curriculum, too, addresses the need for prevocational education. Compulsory subjects such as "economic education" and "preparation for working life" are designed to motivate young people and their teachers to tackle economic and career issues. Optional practical courses with titles such as "career guidance and educational information" aim to encourage students to make independent decisions on their futures.

In spite of this apparently well-thought-out structure and national commitment to guidance, the system is showing signs of strain. Austrian education is highly complex, with a wide variety of academic and vocational options. Young people have to make important choices relatively early in their school career, and many get it wrong. One estimate is that between 30 and 50 per cent of young people are on the wrong track at the age of 17 or 18. That the educational and career guidance currently offered is not meeting their needs is demonstrated by the high proportion of drop-outs from all levels in the system. Almost one in five of the young people who enter the upper grades of the academic secondary school, for example, fails to complete the course; one in three students from technical and vocational colleges discontinues his or her studies. In the universities, the drop-out rate in 1990 was running at 56 per cent.

This generally high attrition rate does not have a marked effect on the Austrian economy, because of the safety net offered by apprenticeship. Some 60 per cent of drop-outs from the more academic strands of the system move into the dual system, which has excellent retention rates: 94 per cent of apprentices complete their training – although not necessarily in the occupation they originally chose.

Nevertheless, nearly 20 per cent of young people ends up with neither a complete vocational training nor a higher education qualification.

Lower secondary level

At the age of 10, Austrian children begin their secondary education at one of two types of school. About 72 per cent go to general (*i.e.* non-academic) secondary schools (*Hauptschule*), and about 26 per cent are selected to attend the lower grades of academic secondary schools (*allgemeinbildende höhere Schule*).[21]

Economic education has been a compulsory element in the lower secondary school curriculum since 1962, blended into the teaching of other subjects (such as geography, history, social science, mathematics or German). The idea is that every citizen should understand economic processes, and that economic education should help "students to understand Austria's interdependence with the rest of the world and to familiarise themselves with the world of work which is so important to them".

And the *Hauptschule*, in particular, have always had preparation for work as part of their mission. In 1982, their task was redefined as being "to impart, within four years, a basic, liberal education, and to prepare pupils according to their interests, inclinations, talents and abilities for working life and for transfer to middle or higher level schools". In 1985, curriculum reform introduced "preparation for the world of work" as a generic subject into the curriculum, particularly in grades seven and eight (13-and 14-year-olds). It was intended to address a specific problem: young people had to be prepared for their future lives, when no-one was very sure what the future would hold.

This element of the curriculum encourages young people to conceptualise the future in a flexible and imaginative way. Students work out their own ideas of individual jobs, and compare them – through work experience, work shadowing and visiting different workplaces – with the reality. Links are established between companies and schools to give the young people an insight into how industry works, and to enable them see as many different jobs as possible. Overall, the hope is that students will understand from an early age that the world of work is constantly changing, and that "to choose a career means to plan one's life" (Fink *et al.*, 1990).

The prevocational year

Unique to the Austrian system is the prevocational year – and this too is currently a cause of some anxiety. Confusingly, lower secondary school in Austria ends in the eighth grade (normally at the age of 14), which is one year before the end of compulsory schooling. In the Austrian system this extra year can be spent in a variety of ways. The prevocational year was launched in 1966 for pupils who had finished lower secondary school, but were not yet old enough to start an apprenticeship in the dual system, and was intended to prepare them for work.

Special institutions (*Polytechnischer Lehrgang*) were established in 1964 to offer a prevocational year – which was also expected to solve the problem caused by high youth unemployment, and the raising of the school-leaving age in 1962. For years they were the only type of school in the system which offered practical career guidance to pupils through a course called "from school to working life". In 1978, they pioneered the idea of work experience for pupils. But although they seemed like a useful innovation, they did not succeed in establishing themselves as an indispensable part of the system, partly because they did not offer a recognised qualification. More students now choose academic secondary education, and today there is a great variety of vocational and technical schools and colleges at the upper secondary level, so more young people now fill in their ninth year by beginning a course at one of these and switching to an apprenticeship after one year, or by repeating the first year in an upper grade.

However, about 20 per cent of the age group still takes the prevocational year in a *Polytechnischer Lehrgang*, and from 1995 they will receive guidance from a new generation of specially-trained counsellors, offering both information and individual counselling, in co-operation with the *polytechnische* teachers, the school psychologists, the labour market service, and local employers.

Upper secondary level

Schneeberger (1994) conceptualises the channelling of students to the upper secondary level as taking place through two main distribution systems. The first leads to several further years of full-time schooling. After completing the eighth grade, students can opt for:

- four years of academic study at an academic school in preparation for university (16 per cent of the age group followed this route in 1993);
- five years at a technical and vocational college which equips them for working life and also gives access to university (chosen by 20 per cent in 1993);
- three or four years at a secondary technical or vocational school – which does not prepare its students for university entrance (10 per cent in 1993).

Once this distribution has taken place, although the system is intended to be flexible, the future of many young people is fixed. In the academic upper secondary schools, educational guidance is carried out by counsellors who offer individual guidance, give information, and run classes outlining the different options – university courses and others – available to those who have passed the matriculation exam (*Matura*). Virtually all the emphasis is on this transition, and unlike in the lower secondary school, little attention is paid to developing an understanding of the world of work. Students in secondary technical and vocational schools are offered a similar type of guidance, with more emphasis on how to transfer to apprenticeships. In view of the high number of drop-outs from these schools, counsellors try to start the guidance process as early as possible.

The dual system

The second channel leads students into the famous "dual system" – the well-established apprenticeship scheme which runs parallel to the school and college system. Young people spend between three and three and a half years working in companies, coupled with eight or nine weeks a year spent in specialised vocational schools. In 1993, just over half those leaving the eighth grade followed this route. A contract is signed between the youngster, his or her parents, and the company, detailing their mutual obligations. In particular, the company guarantees to train the young person to an approved standard, and the apprentice pledges his or her labour.

The great strength of this arrangement is that it eases the transition from education to work by combining the two in a way which many young Austrians find acceptable and effective; but there is some concern that the job-related skills it delivers are too limited and specific, and that large employers – especially multinationals – are reluctant to spend money on more flexible, general training. The solution, it is hoped, will be a revamped dual system, due to start in 1996, including a foundation year for those emerging from lower secondary school, and a stronger input from vocational education.

Tertiary level

Austria has twelve universities, all of which are state institutions; the classic traditional universities are in Vienna, Graz and Innsbruck. University education is the right of every young person who successfully completes upper secondary school, and access is completely open. As a result, universities are commonly very overcrowded. At the beginning of each academic year, Austrian universities do not normally have any idea (until the end of registration, which lasts a month) how many students they will have.

Changes of subject or programme of study are common in the first few years, and the drop-out rate is as high as 50 per cent – although it could be argued that many students have never really "dropped in", *i.e.* seriously committed themselves to their studies. At the University of Graz, for example, almost one in three never sits an examination. They tend to sign on at the university as an alternative to registering as unemployed, and leave when they have found a job. Those students who remain often take a very long time to complete their studies. Austria has the oldest graduating students in Europe.

This situation means that the role of the universities *vis-à-vis* the labour market is very unclear. Guidance for students is very variable, and few receive much help from the institution in choosing an occupation or finding a job. Some faculties have advisors or counsellors for those in academic difficulty or who want to change course, and most universities have a psychological department for serious personal problems.

For example, the University of Graz, which has 35 000 students, has four psychologists to counsel young people who are suicidal, or experiencing other forms of breakdown, or who are involved with drugs. This university also has a specific guidance programme for foreign students, especially Bosnians, with twelve specialist advisors who help with financial or language problems. Advice on choosing an occupation, or finding a job on graduation, is not available for the vast majority of students – although some faculties have close relationships with local employers. The rector of the university would like to set up a drop-in centre offering various kinds of information and advice – including career guidance – to students, but is hampered by lack of resources.

Dissatisfaction with the way in which the university system operates, and the conviction that many undergraduates would be better off attending a more vocationally-oriented course, has led the government to establish ten experimental *Fachhochschulen* – colleges for higher professional training. These were set up in autumn 1994, and are expected to produce their first graduates in 1998. The *Fachhochschulen* offer a more flexible and practical alternative to academic university studies. There is also a wide range of post-secondary institutions offering training for professions such as social work, teaching, and paramedical occupations.

The role of the labour administration in guidance

Improving career guidance is seen as one of Austria's most important active labour market policies. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Vienna establishes an overall policy framework and funds the nine provincial Labour Market Boards, which then adapt national employment policies to suit their needs. At the local level, the job centres and career information centres (known as *Berufsinformationszentrum* or *BIZ*) are administered by the Labour Market Service, which is controlled by the relevant provincial board.

The BIZ were set up in the early 1990s, and have mostly replaced youth counselling services at job centres. They are primarily aimed at adults, but the normal age range (20 to about 35) naturally includes a fair number of young people. Some, for example one of the BIZ in Vienna, specialise in services for youth. These centres offer a wide range of printed information including computer-based directories of training opportunities and job vacancies. The philosophy underlying the BIZ approach is that clients should, where possible, be self-directed.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

For example, in Graz, the principal city in Austria's south-western province of Styria, guidance is offered by the BIZ in the form of carefully-structured modules, planned by the local Labour Market Board together with employers and training institutions. All the Styrian BIZ offer the primary module of basic guidance, which normally lasts four weeks, through which individuals identify their interests and aptitudes (sometimes aided by psychometric tests), set targets for themselves, and, if appropriate, choose a further module of guidance. Or they may decide to enter a training module or begin the search for a job. More than 20 local companies co-operate in running the scheme, which eventually should lead to a completely modularised and highly flexible system of work-based training.

Most centres have links with companies which offer vocational training and career guidance, and the current aim is to move towards a fully modular system based in the workplace. For example, the system in Graz was planned over three years, with the collaboration of the local labour market board and employers.

THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

Significant transitions begin early in Austria, because children are channelled into different types of schooling from the age of ten, when they enter lower secondary school. When they move from lower to upper secondary school – or into vocational education – another key choice must be made. Sometimes genuinely independent guidance is hard to find at these two stages, since falling birthrates have led to competition for pupils in some areas, and guidance teachers in the schools, in their efforts to attract pupils, do not always offer them and their parents genuinely objective information. The third transition is from upper secondary school or vocational education into university or different types of post-secondary education such as the *Fachhochschule*. The move from university into work does not seem to be generally recognised as a significant transition, and, as suggested above, is not very well handled.

Transition point I

The first transition point is at the age of ten, when children move from primary to lower secondary school. They have the choice between a general school (*Hauptschule*) or an academic secondary education. The selection is carried out on the basis of their work in primary school, according to the wishes of their parents, and through their teacher's recommendation. Normally, the parents make the final choice, taking into account the child's interests and intellectual abilities and what local facilities are available; this decision-making process is usually shared with the child's teacher. Experience in Graz (which has a big range of schools) suggests that parents are becoming more anxious about transitions between levels of schooling.

two information fairs in the city attracted over 4 000 people, and 400 came to an information evening on school transfer for 10-year-olds.

Transition point 2

The transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education – or into the dual system – can be very complex. For some young people, the route is virtually automatic, and they will opt for another four years of academic schooling, followed by university entrance – although this may not be the wisest course. Others must decide between a five-year course at a technical or vocational college (which could still give them access to university), or three or four years at a secondary technical or vocational college which would not lead to university entrance. Another group must decide how to spend their last year of compulsory schooling, before entering the dual system.

During the period leading up to this watershed, educational counsellors in the schools take classes (mainly for seventh and eighth graders) outlining the various options, and address parents' meetings on the subject of local education and training opportunities after the eighth grade. However, there is a great deal of unmet need for information concerning this transition, especially since parents sometimes feel that school guidance teachers are not knowledgeable enough concerning the labour market, or are too inclined to recommend their own institution, irrespective of the needs of individual young people. Some parents may resort to private counselling agencies, but not all parents can afford to pay for advice.

Local Chambers of Commerce also offer information and advice about the dual system at this stage. The Styrian Chamber of Commerce, for example, employs four full-time counsellors and a specialist in psychometric testing. They see effective guidance as being particularly important for young people who drop out of school or college, those who begin work in the dual system and decide that they want to change, and those who have completed their apprenticeship and want to acquire further qualifications.

This last role is taken very seriously, since the aim to offer individuals with apprenticeship qualifications the opportunity to reach the highest levels of achievement, and career guidance is seen as the key. But in Vienna, which has a high immigrant population, youth workers believe that recent reforms have not addressed the plight of the most deprived youngsters – many from ethnic minorities – who receive little or no guidance, leave school too early, enter unskilled jobs or become unemployed, and are in danger of becoming an excluded underclass.

Transition point 3

A national effort has been made to expand counselling and information services for those who have matriculated from upper secondary school or the higher vocational and technical colleges, in order to combat the relatively high drop-out rate from the universities. There is a very wide range of sources of advice, including the information service of the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts, the psychological student counselling services available in many university towns, and guidance offered by the Austrian Federation of University Students. Study and Career Choice fairs take place every year in all the provincial capitals, offering secondary school leavers information on the whole range of study and employment options. The schools themselves also offer guidance, holding classes and workshops on topics such as how to apply to universities or other tertiary institutions, how to enrol, sources of finance, and how to cope socially and intellectually. Local career information centres (BIZ) also have information on university and *Fachhochschule* programmes, and sometimes BIZ officials visit schools – as do representatives from various student unions.

But – maybe because of this plethora of uncoordinated offers – guidance at this stage is still rather a hit-and-miss affair. Too many secondary school graduates still move automatically to the local university without really considering the alternatives – and often with only a vague idea of what they will study. Not surprisingly, they frequently change courses. Some universities have guidance counsellors attached to individual faculties, who advise on course changes and what they might imply for the future career of the individual, but many departments are too big to offer undecided students much help.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Further and in-service training for educational counsellors in the schools is provided by the individual provinces in institutes for in-service teacher training. With the assistance of the local department for school psychology and educational guidance, different courses are offered for different types of school. Training has markedly improved as the result of a plan developed by a Ministry of Education task group in 1991. This group started from the hypothesis that the efficacy of all career guidance depends on the quality of the teaching that young people receive; this means that the professional development of teachers is crucial.

The result was a modular curriculum for the in-service training of guidance staff, which has been implemented through a series of seminars organised into week-long modules. Between 1990 and 1994, 294 of these were held across Austria, and over 6 600 guidance teachers have participated, most of whom have taken five or six modules spread over two or three years. As a result, in two provinces (Styria and Vorarlberg), over 85 per cent of schools now have teachers who have been trained to impart "educational information", and offer career guidance to their classes.

An important element of in-service training for teachers in Styria is work experience in companies and various branches of industry – a co-operative programme which has been worked out by the Styrian Economic Society together with the Institute for In-service Teacher Training in Graz, on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs (see Härtel and Kämmerer, 1993). Each placement lasts for two weeks, with preparatory sessions and follow-up work taking place at the institute. Since the initiative began, 360 Styrian teachers have spent time in a range of workplaces. The experiment is seen as being highly successful and has also been adopted in the province of Tyrol.

EVALUATION AND INNOVATION

In recent years, a number of measures have been taken to improve career guidance and educational information in Austria. The main aim has been to respond to the drop-out problem, which is seen as a result of inappropriate choices. A number of innovative steps have been taken at lower secondary level to develop a developmental, individualised and self-directed approach to education decisions and career choice, and which encourages teachers to co-operate with companies and industrial enterprises as part of the curriculum. A key development has been the "work experience for teachers" scheme, begun in 1988, which has blurred the traditional distinction between educational and vocational guidance, and has produced a generation of secondary school teachers who are much better informed on labour market matters and able to offer career guidance to their pupils at an earlier stage. In 1994, pupil counselling at special schools and in the prevocational year was introduced. As yet, however, there has been no evaluation of the success of any of these measures.

However, the new initiative run by the Labour Market Service in Styria, which offers a compulsory module of guidance before a young person embarks on an apprenticeship or training programme, looks to be a success. Drop-out rates from training have fallen from 30 per cent in 1991 to 5-6 per cent in 1994, and as a result the number of people without qualifications has also dropped. The strategy of encouraging self-reliance and individual decision-making is seen as being particularly effective.

CONCLUSION

As occupational pathways become more complex, more Austrians are recognising the importance of career guidance. According to Hartel (1995), the key reasons for this growth in interest are:

- the growing diversification of the educational system;
- the almost nation-wide provision of higher level schools;
- dramatically increased enrolments in recent years;
- high drop-out rates between the ninth and 12th grades, and from the universities;
- unemployment due to inappropriate choice of career;
- the subjective "images" formed by young people (and their parents) of certain careers, which often do not correspond with the reality of career patterns;
- the information society, which gives access to huge volumes of data, knowledge and information, making it ever more difficult for individuals to cope.

The aim has been to put in place a system which allows young people to make good educational and career choices on an active and individualised basis. The real strength of the Austrian system is the willingness of policy makers to identify and focus on particular problems from more than one direction. For example, high post secondary drop-out rates are being tackled not only by expanding the amount of educational and career guidance available in school, but by diversifying possible pathways for the young through *the creation of new institutions* (such as the *Fachhochschule*), and new qualifications (the *Fachmatura*). Young people emerging from school in the future, having experienced improved guidance through the curriculum, should be better prepared to make career decisions than in the past.

But can such improvements keep up with the rapid changes in the jobs market? There is currently a sense of uncomfortable transition, as a stable but rather rigid framework begins to distort under pressure, new initiatives spring up everywhere, and policy makers wait to see if the steps they have taken will solve the problems. The vast network of co-operating institutions – including Federal Ministries, provincial boards, chambers of commerce, trade unions, labour authorities, various psychological services – used to be a great strength of the Austrian system. But now, as they all try to adapt to changing circumstances, the impression is one of complexity and incoherence. Simplification is badly needed. And the inadequacy of educational and career guidance of all kinds for students in the universities should be urgently addressed.

Case Studies

CASE STUDY A: *GYMNASIUM*, REIN, NEAR GRAZ

This school is an academic rural high school specialising in languages, with 600 pupils aged between 10 and 19 and 56 teachers. There are two school counsellors, one of which is a mathematics teacher who offers both educational and vocational guidance. She has had extensive in-service training (three basic courses, and five further courses in subjects such as communications and conflict resolution).

This guidance teacher is available for one hour a week for pupils who want an individual consultation, but mostly she works with whole classes, offering both educational guidance and careers education. Because students in her own class approach her with numerous queries, she believes that there is a widespread unmet need for guidance – not only in her school, but in others too. It is important, she says, not to give young people ready-made answers to their queries. They need to feel that they are finding their own solutions.

Each year group in the school has different requirements. For example, in the first year the guidance teacher introduces the basic ideas of guidance and choice to the pupils, and towards the end of the second year they often need help in choosing subjects and programmes of study. At the end of the fourth year (in effect, lower secondary school), pupils may change schools and move to vocational or technical schools; about one in three leaves then, because the specialist language curriculum offered by the school is very demanding. Students who have stayed on to the seventh year need guidance in preparing themselves for their *Matura* examination.

Parents, too, need advice, and the guidance counsellor is responsible for organising programmes to inform them about what the school offers, and what else is available in the area for their children. The guidance teacher also has close links with the local department for school psychology and educational guidance, to which she refers students with behaviour problems or family difficulties.

CASE STUDY B: *BERUFSINFORMATIONSZENTRUM* (BIZ), VIENNA

This special careers information office for young people has a lively and welcoming atmosphere, complete with badges and T shirts (with slogan "Don't Panic") and other promotional materials. It serves between 5 000 and 6 000 young people aged between 14 and 20 every year. Some come in school parties with a guidance teacher, others on their own, with their parents or with friends. They can use computer programmes and databases, take part in group discussions about their future, or watch one of the 900 available videos. Telephones and photocopies are free.

These resources are aimed at helping young people choose their next step, whether it be employment, training, or another stage of education. The BIZ is open to school pupils, their parents, young people looking for apprenticeships, college students unhappy with the vocational or academic course they have chosen, or university graduates uncertain what to do next. Sometimes, 14- and 15-year-olds are looking for help from the BIZ in choosing an upper secondary school; they can take interest and aptitude tests, and find out which type of school programme leads to what career. Workers at this BIZ in Vienna are particularly anxious to help young people from deprived backgrounds and ethnic minorities, but find them hard to reach.

The emphasis throughout is on self-directed information retrieval with some guidance: the BIZ advisors have training in communication skills, but normally no background in psychology or counselling. If they feel that in-depth guidance is needed, they can refer the young person to a psychologist employed by the Labour Market Service, or to a Ministry of Education psychologist attached to the department for school psychology and educational guidance.

CANADA
No single recipe for success

OVERVIEW

Since the ten provinces and two northern territories which make up the nation of Canada have completely autonomous education systems, it is not easy to get a coherent overall view of the current position of educational and career guidance – and there is a risk of over-simplifying the national picture. Different provinces and territories have very varied traditions, institutions and policies. For example, school-based guidance programmes, and the use of information technology, are very much more developed in some provinces than in others. The system in the French-speaking province of Quebec is very different from that in the other provinces and territories.

It is, however, fair to say that guidance and counselling in much of Canada is in a state of transition. Traditionally, counselling in schools has concentrated on a psycho-social approach and individual problems; relatively few school counsellors have any training in career guidance. There is now a trend, however, towards delivering guidance through the regular school curriculum, and several provinces and territories have recently introduced guidance courses which carry academic credit for the students. Almost half the provinces (including Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec) have compulsory courses for their secondary-age students.

There are a large number of innovations and initiatives across the country, some initiated by Human Resources Development Canada (the equivalent of federal Ministry of Labour), which can put money into projects but has no control over career guidance in the provincial education systems. As a result of this lack of overall co-ordination, there are patches of very good practice, and large areas in which young people are receiving a very inadequate service. Training also is very variable: some counsellors are well-prepared, but others have no background in career guidance at all. However, the range of materials and teaching resources available for career guidance is very extensive and of a high quality, and Canada is in the vanguard when it comes to computerised methods of delivering guidance, which are widely used across the country.

The time seems ripe for a more coherent national approach, but politically this might be hard to achieve. The best approach for the future looks like being a focus on the counselling profession itself – particularly in terms of strong leadership and established standards, more extensive training, workable monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to establish which approaches are most fruitful, and more support from educators – so that school counsellors are assigned appropriate amounts of time for their career guidance work.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

The Canadian education system is highly decentralised. There is no federal Ministry of Education and each province or territory administers its own system. Consequently, no federal body plans or co-ordinates education across the country. The importance of educational and career guidance has not generally been recognised by the provincial ministries – though a handful stand out as being well in advance of the rest.

With one or two exceptions, Canadian schools are "owned" by local school boards – which are independent agencies within the province or territory with elected board members. In curriculum and administrative matters, these boards must carry out the directives and regulations and observe any guidelines issued by the provincial or territorial Ministry of Education. But so far as guidance and counselling services go, the guidelines established by the ministries are largely optional, and not enforced except where mandatory guidance courses exist – which are becoming increasingly common among the provinces. A school board, or even an individual school principal, may choose to implement such guidelines wholly, in part, or not at all – so practice varies a great deal not only from school board to school board, but even from school to school, within the same province or territory.

The current spread of interest in career guidance – as opposed to more personal forms of counselling – is driven mainly by economic concerns. The unemployment rate in Canada is currently 10 per cent, and the country has recently entered into free trade agreements with the United States and Mexico. Global economic competition is increasing, and there is a shortage of unskilled jobs which in the past were taken by high school drop-outs. Canada also has a high level of immigration, which means that relatively large numbers of people need help in learning English or French, in equipping themselves with marketable skills, and in finding jobs. Particularly influential has been a widely-publicised and highly-regarded study carried out by the Conference Board of Canada, which identified the general "employability skills" which young Canadians need in order to find work (Conference Board of Canada, 1992). These have been presented to the Ministries of Education and many school boards as desirable minimum criteria for graduation from high school – though some educators feel that they are unrealistically high.

The employment service in Canada, unlike education, is centralised at the federal level. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) operates about 450 employment centres[22] across the country, which pay out unemployment insurance, offer a job placement service and refer unemployed workers for retraining. Young people and adults can also receive career guidance through these centres, but only if they are receiving unemployment insurance. This rule, sadly, limits the usefulness of the centres as a resource for young people.

Elementary and middle level

Different provinces in Canada structure their schooling differently, but the most common pattern is for primary/elementary schools to take students between the ages of six and 12 (grades one to six).[23] Students in most provinces then move on to junior high school for about three years (four in the case of Saskatchewan),[24] before transferring to senior high schools for the last three or four years of compulsory schooling.

Although there is no fixed pattern, guidance counsellors are found in a number of schools at this level – usually focusing their attention on students in grades six to eight (aged between 11 and 14). Most of their work involves personal interviews with young people and, sometimes, their parents in the counsellors' office, but schools in an increasing number of provinces are also offering a developmental curriculum covering issues such as personal development, health, family relationships, study skills, and career planning. Students are encouraged to view career education as an integral part of understanding themselves and planning for the future. A few provinces encourage this sort of programme from kindergarten upwards.

One initiative is the Lions[25] *Quest* programme, which aims to improve the self-confidence, motivation and communication skills of the entire staff of a school. The project's emphasis on personal development is now influencing the curriculum of a number of them. For example, one school board in Northern Ontario has developed a World of Work curriculum for all grade eight students, which dovetails with their grade seven curriculum developed from the *Quest* programme. The grade eight students explore, through discussion, group work, and individual and group career counselling, how different subject areas connect to the world of work – which encourages both short and long term goal setting (Levi and Zeigler, 1991).

Secondary level

There is a long tradition of school counsellors in Canadian high schools (usually grades ten to 12), but their role has been to offer personal and social counselling – especially to individual students in difficulty. Research involving 758 schools in the province of Alberta suggests that about one in four secondary students has

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experienced individual counselling interviews, which normally lasted about 20 minutes, and school counsellors play an important role in the emotional well-being of students. Many counsellors are currently under pressure to deal with an ever-increasing range of issues, often including career guidance – but it is usually up to individuals how much time they allocate to this topic. Although many do a good job, some wish that they had been better trained for this function and had more time to carry it out. Still others do not see career guidance as being part of their job – although this is not true of Quebec.

This bias towards personal counselling is partly because in Canada the training of counsellors emphasises the psycho-social side of counselling, and offers virtually no orientation towards career-focused topics such as understanding the world of work, career paths, occupations and the structure of the local labour market – an area of expertise where many school counsellors are not very knowledgeable, and lack confidence except in Quebec. But in the last few years, understanding of the importance of career guidance has grown, and developmental secondary-level programmes have become an increasingly common element in the compulsory school curriculum. They usually take up about 50 minutes a week and cover health education, personal and physical development, learning skills and career guidance. It is standard practice for school counsellors to run sessions for students from the tenth grade and upwards, explaining the requirements for successful graduation from high school, and outlining the procedure for applying to university. These sessions now frequently include elements of career guidance.

In Alberta, where counselling in schools is more developed than in most other provinces, grade 11 students (aged between 16 and 17) must take a compulsory programme on career exploration. In twelfth grade, their final year in high school, when they have had the results of various aptitude tests and self evaluations, they begin a course known as Career and Life Management – taught mainly through active learning techniques such as workshops and journal-keeping – which includes health and human development, and a unit on communication skills.

Schools in the more go-ahead provinces offer computer-assisted guidance programmes, which ideally are introduced and contextualised by a guidance teacher. In Alberta, for example, high school students typically spend 40 minutes in self-assessment and planning, and 40 minutes using the computer – sometimes followed by a 10-minute interview with a counsellor to review the results and build on them. In Quebec, computer guidance is freely available for students, whatever their needs.

Tertiary level

Every college, institute of technology, vocational centre or university in Canada has control over its own counselling service. Unlike secondary schools, which usually have one guidance office for all student services, tertiary institutions often have separate offices for personal and social counselling, student support, career development and job placement. Those who ask for career counselling probably get thorough and appropriate individual guidance – but the evidence suggests that, across Canada, only about 10 per cent of post-secondary students ever use these services. In colleges with a strong counselling department, however, the proportion is likely to be higher.

At Algonquin College, in Ontario, for example, the ten-strong team who run Student Support Services see their role as helping students to achieve their full potential throughout their college career. The counsellors carry out about 9 000 half-hour interviews a year with current students – of which about half involve personal issues, and half educational or career matters. They see themselves as having a fourfold mission: to attract the students in the first place; to make sure that they are on the right course and give them the study skills to succeed on it; to prevent them from dropping out; and to place them in a job at the end. A key strategy, says the service director, is to instil a sense of "belongingness" in students who come from a very wide variety of backgrounds. They are encouraged to be self-directed, using the careers centre (which is open in the evenings) to assess their own interests and aptitudes through tests. These methods seem to be succeeding – retention rates are up.

Algonquin's emphasis on a developmental approach is shared by the director of student services at the University of Alberta, which has 30 000 students. Between September and March, the Career and Placement Service receives between 400 and 500 visits a day, and the aim is to encourage students to use it from their first year in order to develop their skills in planning and self-assessment.

In most tertiary institutions, far more students use career information centres and job placement services at the end of their course than ask for educational or career guidance at an early stage. However, many placement offices do more than arrange interviews with potential employers; they may run workshops on topics such as job search methods, interview techniques, preparing a resume or curriculum vitae, and how to start a business. Particular faculties in some institutions ask all their students to take mandatory – but usually non-credit – courses in subjects such as career planning. But courses at this level on how to plan a career (or other aspects of vocational guidance) for which students can gain credits are virtually non-existent.

The role of the employment services

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has a strong influence on the growth and practice of educational and career guidance throughout the country, by providing a wide range of career guidance materials which are highly-regarded and widely used – both by employment centres and by educational institutions. The department has also developed a number of computer-based packages, the first of which (the very successful CHOICES programme) has been taken over by a private company which has continued to develop it and actively markets it in North America, Europe and elsewhere. HRDC's training programme for its own guidance workers in Canada Employment Centres – which consists of four courses in employment counselling – is also extensively used outside the department.

In such a large country, dissemination, liaison and networking are even more important than elsewhere, and HRDC sees these activities as an important aspect of its role. For the last 20 years, for example, the department has organised an annual National Consultation on Career Development which normally attracts over 1 000 practitioners and researchers. But the department's undoubted influence on career guidance within the education system is limited to programmes such as those mentioned above, rather than direct financial support.

The role of employers

Employers in Canada are generally active in offering work experience to students, and taking part in careers fairs organised by schools or Ministries of Education. In 1994, for example, four large Toronto companies organised a highly successful "Take Our Kids to Work" day, which resulted in more than 60 000 students attending over 4 000 workplaces with their mothers, fathers, relatives, or friends. Some children were allocated volunteer hosts or mentors. In Quebec, employers are becoming more and more involved in introducing students to the world of work, offering various kinds of vocational experience in co-operation with schools and colleges. And the Youth Internship Programme (see case study) is an example of nation-wide co-operation between the HRDC and big employers.

Little systematic research has been carried out among Canadian employers as to what they think of the quality of career guidance. On an informal basis, they frequently criticise the 'poor' advice which is offered to schoolchildren. It would seem, though, that many have not understood the realities of the system, and are under the impression that all schools have full-fledged career counsellors, rather than generalist counsellors who (except in Quebec) are rarely trained in giving career guidance.

THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

Canada's dispersed population and democratic educational traditions mean that until very recently, movement through the education system was not really conceptualised in terms of problematic transitions. Virtually all children went to local schools, and moved together as a class. There was little choice of school, so movements between levels were more or less automatic. Similarly, under conditions of full employment, with plenty of unskilled jobs available, the transition from education into work was not perceived as an event which had to be specially prepared for and mediated; until recently few specific programmes had been developed, except for students with special needs.

Nationally, most anxiety today is focused on students who drop out of high school. In 1990, HRDC launched a nation-wide campaign urging young people to stay at school until graduation, and backed this up with grants to schools and other organisations to experiment with innovative approaches. But although the programme resulted in much interest and activity over three to five years, when it ended there was no concerted effort to solidify and promote the positive results which many projects had achieved; the knowledge and understanding which had been developed remained scattered, and much of it was lost.

Potential drop-outs are often identified using a "Decisions" questionnaire (Quirouette, 1993) which has so far been used with over one million students across the country. The questionnaire is scored on factors which are known to influence a young person's decision whether or not to stay in school – their family background, personal traits, plans for further education, academic ability, relationships with teachers, and attitude to school. At-risk students can then be offered special programmes which are aimed at improving their motivation, developing their understanding of how to plan for the future, and keeping them in school long enough to gain useful qualifications. New Brunswick offers a particularly strong example of good practice with its STAR programme (Services Targeted for Adolescents at Risk) aimed at young people aged between 16 and 18 (OECD, 1996*c*).

Transition point 1

In most provinces, sixth grade students move en masse from the elementary school to the local junior high school – although those who are faltering may be held back for one year in order to catch up academically. Such decisions are made jointly by the teaching staff, the school counsellor, and the parents. Preparation for this transition is not usually very elaborate, but may include visits by school counsellors from the junior high schools to the elementary schools to discuss the change with the pupils, and visits by the pupils to their new school, in order to smooth the transition.

Transition point 2

The second transition – from elementary to secondary school, or from junior to senior high school – is becoming more complex. In some areas and especially in the private sector, different schools are beginning to offer different programmes, and such diversity is likely to spread with the fledgling Charter Schools movement.[26] In Alberta – the first province to experiment with these highly-differentiated newly-founded schools – around 15 opened their doors in 1996. They offer a wide variety of curriculum, pedagogical approach, and ethos: one is a girls' school complete with school uniform (most unusual in Canada), and another caters for gifted children. School counsellors in junior high schools can expect to be asked more and more to offer guidance with regard to these choices – which will often include an element of career planning.

Such changes will lead to more complex transitions as parents and young people have to make choices, and schools have to compete for custom. In some areas, high school counsellors and high school students already visit the local junior high schools in spring to talk to the graduating class about the step they are about to take – partly to make the transition easier for them, and partly to promote their own institution. Many high schools now hold open days and offer tours round the school to prospective pupils and their parents.

Transition point 3

Perhaps the key strategy for mediating the transition from school to work is through partnerships between schools and local industry (known in Canada as co-operative education). Young people take part in supervised learning experiences in a work place, which is recognised as being part of the academic curriculum. These practices are normally managed by co-ordinators working for the local school board, or in the schools themselves, and have been widespread since the mid-1980s. Although some programmes work well, others have been restricted to the least able and motivated students (which in some cases has put off employers); what's more, co-ordinators and school counsellors have not always collaborated effectively – since the counsellors are viewed as lacking knowledge and understanding of the local labour market and the world of work. Cutbacks in funding are now encouraging some school boards to put co-operative education under guidance, which may encourage the personnel to work together more constructively.

This means that the students sometimes have difficulty in linking what they learn on the job with their school-based guidance. Yet both work experience programmes and career guidance share common objectives: understanding the world of work; developing self-discipline and a positive attitude to the future; considering a variety of occupations; learning to make good decisions; growing in self-awareness; and developing transition skills. Recently, however, British Columbia and the Yukon have both announced that a planned and supervised work experience component will become part of the secondary school programme.

The transition to tertiary education is often eased not only by the guidance offered by high school counsellors, but by the counselling services of the post-secondary institutions themselves. For example, the university of Alberta has a high school liaison group, whose members prepare material on various areas of study, run on-campus talks and workshops for high school counsellors, visit the schools and organise open days for prospective students. At Algonquin College in Ontario, roughly one in four guidance interviews (about 3 000 a year) represent pre-admissions counselling – young people and adults who are exploring the college and other institutions in order to decide on their next move.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Except in Quebec which has its own regulations, all counsellors in Canadian elementary and secondary schools must be licensed teachers; some have a master's degree in counselling or a related area, but many do not. At the tertiary level, guidance staff are normally graduates with a master's degree in counselling or psychology.

The key problem is that such specialist qualifications emphasise personal and social counselling rather than career guidance. Fewer than one in three university faculties of education offer as many as two postgraduate courses relevant to educational and career guidance. A further third probably offers one. And for teachers or counsellors who want to update their skills, there are very few programmes in career guidance which lead to a specialised degree or diploma – although interest among universities is gradually increasing. The province of Quebec – well-known for the high quality of its training – offers specialised programmes at three francophone universities. One anglophone university also offers a three-year diploma in employment counselling.

As a result (except in Quebec), only about half Canada's secondary school and college counsellors have taken two or more courses in the subject, and many students are receiving career guidance from counsellors unqualified in this area of their work. Initial teacher training in the English-speaking provinces virtually never includes anything on career guidance, and when teachers are assigned to teach guidance courses they are often given little specialist training apart, perhaps, from a one- or two-day briefing.

The counselling staff in Canada Employment Centres can receive high-quality training by enrolling in university-level courses on employment counselling, specially created for HRDC. These courses (on assessment, individual employment counselling, group counselling and the use of tests) include stringent competency-based examination requirements.

The main method that most counsellors use to enhance and maintain their skills is through a flourishing network of workshops, conferences and seminars. Some 60 per cent of secondary school counsellors, and 68 per cent of post-secondary counsellors, attend at least one conference a year, usually paid for by their institution. The Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association has introduced a programme of Continuing Education Units which are becoming popular with counsellors who are looking for a way of certificating their competencies. However, there is still a need to emphasise the importance of career guidance, which tends to be given only limited attention at guidance and counselling conferences.

Quebec – a special case

The French-speaking province of Quebec has had its unique approach to educational and career guidance for nearly 45 years. In particular, the province benefits from an influential specialist association – *Ordre professionnel des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec* (OPCCOQ). In order to use the title "counsellor", guidance workers must belong to this association.

Every school has vocational guidance counsellors who must have a postgraduate diploma in career guidance and do not normally have a teaching background. Orientation (*i.e.* steering young people in the appropriate direction) is taken very seriously – indeed counselling materials refer to it as being "at the heart of educational achievement". Choosing the right subjects at school, related to a student's aspirations, is seen as crucial – so guidance begins early, at the end of the first cycle of secondary education. Young people are offered individual counselling, class-based guidance programmes, and access to computerised information. The aim is that every young person should leave school with a workable plan for his or her future employment.

Postgraduate qualifications in vocational guidance are offered by two Quebecois universities – Sherbrooke and Laval. Both of these also undertake extensive research in career counselling, and Sherbrooke has a Research Centre which focuses on education for working life (*Centre de Recherche sur l'Éducation au Travail*, or CRET). The centre concentrates in particular on how individuals adapt to work in relation to the guidance and preparation they receive, and their integration into the workplace. The CRET has set up a database which identifies local employers who are prepared to collaborate with schools and colleges in order to improve the preparation of young people for working life. At Laval University, the work carried out at the Centre for Research into Career Development is centred on transitions between jobs. One aspect which is currently being developed is a programme to help girls and young women explore and establish career plans which take account of the important role that relationships play in their lives.

EVALUATION AND INNOVATION

The most widespread innovation of the past decade has been "peer helping" – the idea of students assisting each other in a wide variety of ways. This initiative, which began in the high schools, has spread to tertiary institutions across the country and is an integral part of many guidance programmes. Peer tutoring (young people of the same age helping each other with their schoolwork) and cross-age tutoring (older students helping younger ones) have been used in Canada for at least 30 years. More recent is the idea of "peer counselling", which, according to one study (Guttman, 1985) was "highly effective" in promoting social leadership and group discussion. Peer counsellors were influential in reducing absenteeism and dropping out and increasing favourable attitudes to schoolwork. They also helped fellow-students to deal with a wide range of anxieties on issues such as loneliness, sexuality, family and work.

A major programme to promote innovation right across Canada is the Creation and Mobilisation of Career Resources for Youth (CAMCRY), which is a programme of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation now involving 140 professors and researchers in over 40 innovative activities. HRDC has so far provided some $10 million in support of this project, in order to set up linkages and partnerships; to publish and disseminate information on guidance and counselling; to provide in-service training for counsellors; and to promote innovation and policy formation among organisations which deliver career, educational or employment counselling for young people aged between 15 and 25. A number of programmes and resources have been developed under the CAMCRY banner aimed at helping young people to progress from career exploration, through the acquisition of appropriate skills for employment, to the period of adjustment entailed in any first job. The materials produced by CAMCRY for counsellors include packages focusing on labour market information, on how to integrate career content with school subjects, and on work with aboriginal youth. Now that the "Creation" phase is well-developed, the Foundation is actively working on "Mobilisation".

Another important initiative has been the Canada Career Information Partnership, which was organised by HRDC as a national network of government and private sector agencies. They work together to provide career and labour market information to Canadians. The partnership's goals are: to identify the career information which is needed by young people and adults; to pool information, research and knowledge on career development and labour markets across the country; to plan and organise Canada Career Week events and activities; and to explore and develop the use of electronic access to career information.

Some provinces are developing student portfolios as evidence of particular skills and types of development. Although at the moment they are used mainly as a guidance tool to give students self-confidence and encourage them to think about their own progress as learners, they could in the future be developed into permanent individual records of achievements, skills and qualifications. Recently, a project has begun to explore the possibility of students creating their own multimedia portfolios on school computers, and keeping personal copies on floppy disks.

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CONCLUSION

The key strength of the Canadian system is that almost every secondary and post secondary student has access to a guidance counsellor – the average being about one counsellor for every 500 students. These counsellors have an abundance of educational and career information materials and programmes prepared by the federal government, provincial governments, universities and the private sector. This last, in particular, is actively looking to collaborate with education institutions to improve the quality of career guidance.

Currently, there is a real desire among counsellors to upgrade their skills, there is a lively self-improvement network in Canada, a number of national initiatives, and a growing realisation that career guidance needs specialist training. As compulsory guidance courses in schools become more common, more and more students are receiving guidance in a developmental context. The materials and resources developed by Human Resources Development Canada are excellent and should be more widely drawn on, and the teaching and training packages published by the province of Alberta represent an important national resource. The current moves towards establishing guidance on the Internet and through CD-ROM are particularly interesting.

But the lack of any effective national co-ordinating body for educational and career guidance means that individual provinces are developing their educational and career guidance programmes in virtual isolation from what is happening in other areas. What's more, the almost complete delegation of responsibility for the implementation of educational policies to the local school board, school principal or even to individual counsellor means that practice is unmonitored on a national or even a provincial basis. This results in an incoherent service full of gaps and inconsistencies, from which some students in effect receive no counselling at all.

Training, too, is generally inadequate: classroom teachers regularly conduct guidance courses without any specialist knowledge or understanding of the subject, and, similarly, counsellors trained in psycho-social counselling are often expected to offer career guidance without adequate preparation, especially on labour market issues. Sometimes, school counsellors are not well-supported, and feel their contribution is not recognised. The job badly needed to be redefined, restructured and validated – the establishment of professional standards being an essential step in the process.

Case Studies

SCARBOROUGH CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE STUDIES

This thriving institution, set in a small community outside Toronto, is, according to its mission statement, "committed to lifelong learning through the support of individuals in transition". A most unusual form of high school, wholly funded by the Scarborough School Board, it enables young people and adults who have not graduated successfully at grade 12 level (perhaps because they left school early or are newly arrived in the country) to gain a high school diploma. Once this has been achieved, the centre will help the student to find work or an appropriate higher level education or training course. Between one third and one half of the programmes offered are co-operative education – *i.e.* include workplace experience, usually of ten weeks' duration.

The centre currently has 1 200 students, about half of whom are immigrants, and is relatively generously staffed with 16 counsellors, all of whom have been through a guidance training programme. The centre liaises with the local community services on a scheme called EASE (Employment, Assessment and Support through Education). This means that every two weeks, they receive 20 people who are on welfare, and put them through a six-week programme to upgrade their basic skills. Each year the centre puts on a number of information fairs for its students – an option fair, an educational fair, a career fair, and even an "ethno-cultural wellness" fair, since students from immigrant backgrounds sometimes find it hard to get adequate health care.

While most programmes offered are for students who have already decided what occupation to follow, an important innovation is Employment Exploration, which gives each student ten weeks to work up to a job interview. He or she undertakes a structured exploration of opportunities in the community, and by the end should have an education/career plan focused in a particular occupational direction. About 300 students per year also sign on for a course in career planning, a full credit course which includes English as a second language if required.

Orientation is an important aspect of the centre's work, because moving back into education can be hard – even humiliating. This means that counselling is an integral aspect of the process at every stage. New students are assessed in English and mathematics, and then undergo an interview to establish their current level of overall performance, before moving onto a programme which leads to the high school diploma. Every student must have an individual interview with a counsellor at least once each semester (there are two semesters a year), but can also see them on demand. Special Services also runs workshops for students on specific issues. Counsellors visit each class at least once per semester to explain the programmes offered by the centre and outline its services, and are sometimes asked to address particular classes by the teaching staff.

The philosophy of the centre's department of Special Services is that all counselling is developmental and should be integrated – since an individual's personal life should be in order if her or she is to make good career decisions. But this integration needs to be well-handled. For example, guidance staff are advised not to become swamped in personal counselling, but to refer students with time-consuming problems to the centre's full-time social worker. And there is no assumption, as there is in some institutions, that teaching staff ought to be willing to guide their students. Their role is seen as delivering the curriculum, but liaising closely with counsellors in the process.

This initiative appears to be very successful. Although it is not usually possible to track every one of the centre's graduates, it is known that of the 500 who graduate each year, about half enter tertiary education, and at least another 100 get jobs.

YOUTH INTERNSHIP

The goal of Youth Internship Canada (YIC) is to create entry level jobs in new and emerging industries and to provide young people (normally between the ages of 15-24) with the skills enhancement and practical work experience they need to gain a foothold in the labour market. Through YIC, participants can also pursue further post-secondary education or can start their own business.

In partnership with industry officials and the business community, young people gain access to supervised work experiences which provide them with a combination of employability and personal skills they need to get and keep a job.

YIC has three primary streams: the Community-Based stream, School-Based stream and Sector-Based streams. YIC is currently piloting two new programmes: Youth Experience to help underemployed and unemployed post-secondary graduates obtain relevant work experience related to their chosen field of study (which also allows post-secondary students to travel abroad to gain work experience on an international level), and Youth Entrepreneurship which helps young people become self-sufficient by helping them start their own business.

Since introduction of the programme in 1994/95, YIC has assisted over 25 700 young people across Canada. The first initiative was in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in conjunction with Standard Aerospace, an aircraft engine manufacturer. Through this project, a committee of companies working in the province's aircraft industry joined forces with HRDC to design and deliver industry specific certificate programmes. During the 43-week programme, 15 unemployed high school graduates received a combination of theoretical instruction and practical work experience in gas turbine repair and overhaul. The results demonstrate that this approach works: of the 32 youth participants at Standard Aero Ltd., 31 completed the programme and were offered jobs on the spot.

FINLAND
A mass system moves towards the individual

OVERVIEW

Finland has a strongly professionalised guidance and counselling system. Within the school system – and particularly within the upper levels of the comprehensive schools – it has a system of student counsellors. Within the national labour administration, it has a guidance service staffed by vocational guidance psychologists. Both groups are highly-qualified by international standards.

Until recently, how guidance should be delivered within the school system (which is administered by the local municipalities) was clearly prescribed by the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education. In particular, a strong emphasis was placed on programmes of guidance within the curriculum. Now, however, the time prescribed for such classes has been reduced. At the same time, more powers are being devolved to the municipalities and to the schools – in terms both of resource allocation and of curriculum control – within a looser national framework than before. As a result, the guidance now being offered is much more diverse – in terms of both quality and quantity – than in the past.

The current role of guidance in Finland is given added importance by the economic difficulties which Finland has experienced in the last few years – linked to the collapse of its traditional markets in the Soviet Union. The result has been very high levels of unemployment both overall (21 per cent in 1994) and among young people aged 15-24 in particular (37 per cent in 1994) – although these figures have recently started to decline a little.

This in principle increases the need for guidance services, but on the other hand it means that such services are at risk from the substantial cuts in public spending which have been made in response to the economic crisis. In practice, the staffing resources for guidance have so far been largely protected from these cuts. There remain concerns, however, that the financial pressures on schools, allied to the greater devolution of resource allocation, could result in some deterioration of guidance provision within the school system. It is important that this be monitored at national level within the next couple of years.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

As in many countries, there are two main guidance systems in operation in Finland. A student guidance service is organised within the educational system, and the national labour administration also offers a vocational guidance service, linked to its educational and occupational information service, and its placement service. This last is a national service, run by the Ministry of Labour.

The student guidance service is supported as part of the school system, and like the schools is funded partly by central government, and partly by the municipalities; it operates within a well-established national curriculum framework developed by the National Board of Education. As well as this, institutions of higher education have developed their own guidance services for their students.

Comprehensive schools (primary and lower secondary level)

All children in Finland attend comprehensive schools for nine years from the age of seven. During their final three years (*i.e.* between the ages of 13 and 16), they now receive guidance classes within the curriculum for a total of at least 72 hours (for example, they may have one hour per week in the seventh class, and then one hour per week in the ninth). The number of guidance classes per week used to be three, but in 1994 this allocation was cut back to two, in order to allow more time for individual counselling. These classes cover self-awareness, occupations and working life, opportunities for further study, and study skills. They must be taught by competent teachers – *i.e.* teachers trained as student counsellors. Linked to these guidance classes, most pupils undertake between one and three weeks of work experience: the current norm seems to be a week in each of the final two years, in different workplaces.

These counsellors are also expected to provide individual counselling for students who seek help. In some cases this may include counselling on personal and social as well as educational and vocational problems: this is less common in those schools (still a minority) which also have school social workers. In addition, students can go to their own class-teacher for advice. His or her role is mainly administrative but may include an informal guidance component.

The appointment of at least one full-time-equivalent counsellor in each school is assured by an agreement between the municipalities and the teacher unions, but there is no agreed ratio of counsellors in relation to overall student numbers, so whether there should be more than one counsellor in the larger schools is worked out by the school and the local municipality.

Upper secondary level

At the age of 16, over half of the age group moves to senior secondary schools. There they follow an academic course, usually in preparation for university. The amount of curriculum time allocated to guidance classes was formerly an hour per week (38 hours per year) in the first two years, and half-an-hour in the third year. Since 1993, this has been reduced to a total of 38 hours over the three years, with schools deciding how these hours should be allocated.

In a few senior secondary schools the student counsellor is a full-time appointment, but in most cases it is part-time and the counsellors often therefore teach other subjects. In addition, each student is attached to a group leader who – as with the class-teacher in the comprehensive school – may have an informal guidance role. The reforms in the senior secondary school curriculum mean that there is now much more demand for individual guidance (see case study A).

Vocational colleges

In vocational colleges, which take about one third of the leavers from the comprehensive schools, and also one third of the leavers from the senior secondary schools, guidance is more integrated into the general teaching process for different subjects than in the comprehensive or senior secondary schools. Teachers in these colleges are expected to incorporate guidance into their teaching – though no training is provided for this. Most courses include placements in workplaces and other forms of contact with working life.

Specific guidance classes are not mandatory, but they are offered on an *ad hoc* basis. Most colleges have counsellors available for their students, but they usually carry out their guidance on a part-time basis, their training is less substantial than in the other schools, and some indeed are untrained for their guidance roles. They commonly have other responsibilities, including, for example, promoting the college's offerings to the comprehensive schools. (A similar pattern is likely to develop in the senior secondary schools, as competition between different institutions for the post-16 market is stimulated by open enrolment policies, and parents and students are encouraged to compare what is on offer and make more conscious choices.)

Vocational colleges are now allowing their students greater freedom of choice across the vocational "lines". This, together with the difficult labour-market situation facing many students on completion of their courses, is posing more questions about the adequacy of the guidance system in these colleges.

Tertiary level

Finland is currently running a national experimental project to develop new guidance and support services in universities and other institutions of higher education. Its main is to help students with their transition into employment (see case study B). The high rate of unemployment means that some establishments are now seeking to improve their systems of student support.

Universities and other higher education institutions usually have student advisers who help young people to choose their courses when they enter the institution, and to deal with any problems that may arise in relation to their studies, but these services are not usually very well-developed. Some vocationally-oriented courses include work placements, but others have no direct contact with working life.

The role of the labour administration

In addition to the guidance services available within education, students also have access to the services offered by the Ministry of Labour – which are also available to young people and adults who have left the education system.

Around 250 vocational guidance psychologists are available to provide intensive counselling for those who need it, and assessment and advocacy for those with special problems. Some experimental work has been done in groups, but most is on an individual basis. The average number of sessions (each of 40-50 minutes) per client is 2.5. In many but not all cases, use is made of psychometric tests.

These services are quite widely used by students: over one-fifth of the clients are from educational institutions. These currently include 6 per cent of the students in comprehensive schools and 5 per cent of those in senior secondary schools. But such figures have declined in recent years, due partly to the consolidation of the guidance system within the schools, and partly to the pressure of demand from other clients, especially unemployed adults. Waiting lists can now be up to a couple of months in some areas, though efforts are being made to provide brief initial contacts or group sessions in such cases.

The Ministry of Labour also offers both an information service and a placement service. In 1994, the information service dealt with over 600 000 requests from around 400 000 people – some in person, some by telephone. Group visits to the information centres are sometimes arranged by schools. A computerised information system has been developed, but at present it can only be used by specialist staff. After it has undergone a redesign to make it easier to use, there are plans to place this system in all educational institutions, as well as in other outlets such as public libraries.

In total, there are around 200 employment offices in Finland, all of which offer job placement; around 120 also offer the vocational guidance and information services. Unemployed people have to register with the employment offices to claim their benefits, and to re-register periodically (every eight months or so). This in theory provides continuous access to the counselling, information and placement services – though there is in general no compulsion to use them, and re-registration can be carried out by telephone.

Until 1994 vocational guidance and placement in Finland was formally a state monopoly. There has now been some growth of private-sector placement agencies, head-hunting services, and outplacement services, though no private-sector vocational guidance agencies have yet emerged. The state employment service now is beginning to charge for some of its services – such as outplacement activities for employers.

Co-ordinating mechanisms

There are liaison mechanisms at a variety of levels between the guidance services within the school system and the labour administration.

At the national level, there are monthly meetings of a working group on school co-operation, appointed by the Ministry of Labour, on which the main partners are represented. There are similar groups at provincial and local levels.

In the end, however, much depends on the local relationship between the vocational guidance psychologists and the student counsellors within a particular school. The closeness of such relationships varies, but they do seem to have become a little more detached in recent years, tending now to be based more on an exchange relationship than on a partnership. For example, schools now have to pay if vocational guidance psychologists give talks at parents' evenings. Visits from the psychologists to schools are becoming less common, as are referrals from schools to the employment centres (see section above). Nonetheless, the complementarity of the two systems is widely recognised, and valued.

THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

There are three key transition points in the Finnish system: from the first six to the final three years of comprehensive school, on leaving the comprehensive school, and on leaving senior secondary school or vocational institutions, and beyond.

Transition point 1

At the age of 13, young people move from the lower stage of comprehensive schools to the upper stage. These may be on the same site but often are not; there are 4 734 comprehensive schools in all, of which only 625 are upper-stage schools. Moreover, whereas in the lower stage pupils are taught mainly by class teachers, in the upper stage they are taught mainly by subject teachers. The student counsellors in the upper stage normally visit the lower-stage schools before the transition, to talk to the pupils and respond to their questions; they then devote the early guidance classes in the upper stage to helping to settle them into their new environment. The class teacher in the upper stage also has an important role in supporting pupils in this transition.

Transition point 2

At the age of 16, over half of the comprehensive school leavers move on to the senior secondary school; while about one-third go on to vocational colleges (some of the rest enter work-based apprenticeships). This transition is therefore largely shaped by the national common application system for these two types of institution. Students are allowed a maximum of five choices; institutions' selection decisions are based on nationally prescribed criteria, but the more popular institutions and subject areas are able to impose higher cut-off points. Guidance therefore has to take into account the likely supply and demand for different institutions and subject areas.

Some students who are unable to move on to the next stage stay at the comprehensive school for a tenth year. In 1989, about 6 per cent of the age-group did this. They try to improve their grades, but it is also common to give a lot of attention to guidance and to work experience – in some cases, such students spend two days a week in workplaces.

There is growing concern about the 10 per cent or so who leave school at 16 but secure neither an educational placement nor a job. Since they are not eligible for unemployment benefits until the age of 17, there is a risk that they will lose contact with support structures related to 'public life'.

Transition point 3

Around the age of 19, the picture becomes more complex. Of those who graduated from senior secondary school in 1992, 40 per cent immediately continued their studies – 22 per cent in universities and 18 per cent in vocational colleges. Others took a year off or (in the case of boys) did their military service, before continuing their studies or entering employment. The same mixed pattern applied to those leaving vocational colleges, though the length of their courses was more variable, and more entered employment at or soon after graduation. There is considerable flexibility in progression pathways within the system.

Senior secondary schools and vocational colleges tend to help students prepare for choices and transitions prior to leaving, but do not normally provide any follow-up support. Universities have traditionally not supplied much help to students on entering employment, but are beginning to do so now: the age of graduation from university is often 25 or over, and many students combine part-time work with their studies. For individuals not based in educational institutions, the main source of continued access to guidance is the service provided by the labour administration.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

The student counsellors in comprehensive schools have normally had a five-year training as teachers, plus teaching experience, followed by a one-year specialist training. There is also a relatively new and limited programme in which the specialist training in guidance is incorporated into the five-year initial teacher training for those who select it as an option. The main focus of the training tends to be on individual counselling skills rather than on classroom work, on the assumption that skills for the latter have already been acquired through the teacher training provision. This begs the question of whether the teaching skills required for classroom work in guidance differ from those required for other, examination-oriented subjects: arguably more emphasis is needed on facilitative rather than instructional skills. The considerable amount of time which student counsellors spend on classroom work on guidance rather than individual work makes this an important issue.

The training provided for student counsellors in senior secondary schools is now similar to that for comprehensive schools, but in the past has been shorter (usually 20 weeks in total), as has been that for vocational colleges; some have received no specific guidance training at all. The latter is also true of most people carrying out guidance roles in universities: they tend to be regarded as administrators rather than guidance professionals.

The vocational guidance psychologists in the labour administration have had a six-year training as psychologists plus a 55-day specialist professional training. Information officers and placement officers have usually had a college-level education plus 15 days' specialist training.

EVALUATION AND INNOVATION

Within the school system, there is a strong move to reduce the level of prescription and inspection from the centre, and to provide for more autonomous local decision-making. The National Board of Education is thus, for example, developing tools for school self-evaluation. It continues to carry out periodic reviews of the school system, though such reviews have not yet focused specifically on the guidance service.

The greater level of devolution should increase the capacity for innovation at local level. In principle there could be scope for exploring more diverse patterns of classroom guidance and individual counselling, and more flexible partnership relationships between student counsellors, classroom teachers/group leaders, and subject teachers. There are still some limits on such scope – notably the formal minima for classroom guidance in the comprehensive and senior secondary schools – but these have been reduced in scale. Increasing diversity is likely to make evaluation more difficult, but also more important if standards of delivery are to be maintained.

Within the labour administration, the basic structure remains more uniform because it is a national service. The clients of the vocational guidance psychologists are regularly followed up to find out their destinations and their levels of satisfaction with the service; periodically a longer-term follow-up is also conducted. The introduction of "management by results" measures are encouraging priority to be given (including queue-jumping) to particular target-groups. In general, innovation tends to be fairly slow because of the bureaucratic structure, but when changes are made, they are implemented across the service.

CONCLUSIONS

The distinctive characteristics of the guidance system in Finland include: its highly professional guidance structure both within the school system and in the labour administration; and its emphasis on guidance classes within the curriculum, including a formal prescription of curriculum time for such classes.

The guidance system is particularly strong in comprehensive schools, where the within-school provision is more consistent, and the links with the vocational guidance psychologists more regular, than in subsequent stages. The fact that all comprehensive schools have a full-time and trained student counsellor, who in most cases has had experience as a teacher and therefore has added credibility in the eyes of other teaching staff, is a major asset. Its potential "down-side" is that it may lead to the notion that guidance is a solely specialist activity, and therefore to a divorce between guidance and teaching functions. There is also some evidence that the guidance classes are not always very effective: the size of the classes, and the lack of attention to more facilitative teaching skills in the training of student counsellors, tend to mean that they are taught on an instructional basis, and their relevance is not always perceived by students, especially as they do not lead to examination grades, and "future orientation" is often problematic for young people in mid-adolescence (the value attached to privacy and reticence in Finnish culture is a further source of difficulty).

Post-16, the guidance system is somewhat less strongly developed, though the needs for enhanced guidance are being more widely recognised. This latter is due partly to reforms designed to introduce greater curricular flexibility, which gives more scope for – but makes more demands of – student choice, and partly to the growth of unemployment and the anxieties this has induced.

One of the weaknesses of the current system is the lack of follow-up of students after they leave particular institutions. This means that there is no support structure for those who do not move on immediately to other institutions. It also means that there is limited information on student destinations to feed back to those entering particular options (some general information of this kind is collected by the government statistical office, but does not seem to be in common use for guidance purposes). This would seem to be a particularly important issue in relation to the vocational colleges. The service offered by the vocational guidance psychologists provides some access to guidance on a lifelong basis. The service is substantial and highly skilled by international standards but is still limited in relation to potential demand, and is not widely advertised. More attention needs now to be given to more diverse ways of providing support to adults who wish to, or are forced to, review their career direction, and to optimising the role of the vocational guidance service in relation to such diversified provision.

Case Studies

CASE STUDY A: SIMONKYLÄ SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, VANTAA

Simonkylä Senior Secondary School has 335 students, most of them aged 16-19. It has since 1987 been operating the non-graded curriculum structure which is now being extended to all senior secondary schools: under this structure, students are given greater freedom to take both compulsory and optional courses in the sequence they wish. This is being linked to further reforms designed to reduce the amount of curriculum time devoted to compulsory courses and to give students more responsibility for their own learning. Again, Simonkylä has for some time encouraged a culture of student responsibility.

The experience of the school has been that these reforms greatly increase the demand for, and centrality of, guidance. Students have more freedom of choice: they therefore need more help in exercising this choice. In the view of the school's student counsellor, more of this guidance needs to be on an individual rather than a group basis.

The mandatory 38 hours of group guidance are provided in two main courses: early in the first year, focusing mainly on induction into the school, and on subject choices and their career implications, and towards the end of the second year, focusing mainly on options after leaving the school. These courses include optional sessions with visitors representing different occupations, as well as a half-day visit to a workplace or to a post-school educational institution. There is also an optional course concerned specifically with university entrance.

In addition, the counsellor sees every student at least once: students are then free to return for further sessions if they so wish, and questionnaires are issued twice a year to maintain contact with students' progress and identify those needing further help. At Simonkylä, the counsellor is also a clergyman, and has recognised skills in personal as well as educational and vocational counselling.

CASE STUDY B: CAREER SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

The University of Helsinki is the oldest and largest of the Finnish universities, with over 30 000 students. It has for some years given a certain amount of support for students in their student careers within the university, particularly through student advisers attached to each of the faculties, and through peer student advisers each of whom is attached to a group of ten new students to help them with induction into the student role. Currently this support is being extended through a new scheme under which some academic staff within departments are being invited to act as academic advisers, with whom students can discuss confidentially the progress of their studies, the choices involved, and any learning-related personal concerns.

Traditionally, little formal help has been given with career choice and finding jobs after graduation; most students have readily found jobs linked with their courses. Now, however, the rise in unemployment among graduates has caused public concern, and has meant that many students have had to look at wider options than in the past. This has resulted in a national project to set up new careers services in all universities. Currently this is funded on a short-time basis by the Ministry of Education; it seems likely, however, to be extended, with part-funding also from the Ministry of Labour.

At the University of Helsinki, the careers service is part of the Department of Student Affairs. At present, it has two full-time and five part-time staff, plus 10 part-time staff based in the faculties. Its main current focus is developing liaison with employers and organising recruitment fairs; it also does some individual career guidance (though its staff have no specific professional training for this role). Its steering group comprises deans of faculties, and it also has a role in feeding back labour-market information for the faculties to take into account in academic planning. This feedback role is being reinforced by government policy changes linking university funding more closely to outcomes, one of which is labour-market entry.

ITALY
The need to turn rhetoric into a more consistent reality

OVERVIEW

Government policy in Italy is impressive so far the public declaration of intent goes – and educational and career guidance is no exception. But putting nationwide frameworks in place within such a large and complex system often presents difficulties, and runs the risk of over-riding regional autonomy. As a result – although a number of laws have been passed in the last 30 years which have given schools, school districts and regions the responsibility for organising and implementing different aspects of educational and career guidance – there is no overall national plan for Italy, and such guidance is not mandated by any specific law. Instead, a rich and diversified network of agencies – regional, local and private – has grown up to meet the needs of young people in the different Italian regions, but no national ministry or agency has overall responsibility for implementing educational and career guidance, or for establishing what a young person's entitlement should be.[27] Indeed, some would argue that in such a diverse and fast-growing country (which between 1975 and 1989 had one of the highest economic growth rates in Europe) such an approach would be neither possible nor desirable.

Yet in spite of Italy's relatively strong economic performance, the education system suffers from a number of weaknesses, which were identified in the 1994 National Census Report as including "weak links with the labour market and the lack of a guidance service," as well as "a low level of literacy, high drop-out rates, the inadequacy of key graduating exams, the lack of an assessment system, inefficient economic management, out-of-date curricula and lack of initial teacher education" (*Rapporto Censis*, 1994). As in most countries, the responsibility for guidance is divided. In this case, it is shared between the Ministry of Education, the 19 regions, and the Ministry of Labour. School districts under the Ministry of Education are the basic units of educational administration, responsible for putting national legislation – including ministry policies on educational guidance – into action in the schools. Their effectiveness varies enormously. The regions, which are responsible for some forms of vocational education, and for advice and information about careers, operate through local centres which run vocational education and training initiatives, and offer guidance too. Here, again, there is little consistency of performance. Stimulating and high-quality initiatives are found in some regions, along with almost non-existent services in others. Job placement is carried out by offices run by the Ministry of Labour at the municipal level.

Since public services vary so much from area to area, a large number of other bodies, both public and private, offer guidance too. There is no officially recognised qualification for professional guidance workers or counsellors, and anyone can set up in business. Consequently, although there are examples of excellent practice, it is hard to build on it or systematise it and there is a great deal of duplication. The family is still an important institution in Italy, which means that many decisions are taken on a family basis and structural phenomena such as youth unemployment, so damaging in other countries, can be absorbed by informal individual arrangements. Official sources of information are not always valued, tradition and habit often offering guidelines instead. In spite of the dislocations and inefficiencies inherent in this approach, it does not seem to be too hard for most young people to find advice if they need it – although their parents may well have to pay. These are likely to be the better-off, more motivated families. Those who suffer most from the lack of systematic provision are, inevitably, already the most disadvantaged. For them it can be a real problem locating resources and information and, in particular, personal counselling, which is often only available on a private basis.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

Fragmentation is a real problem for educational and career guidance in Italy, particularly since a strong conceptual distinction is drawn between educational guidance (the duty of the school), and career guidance (the responsibility of the labour authorities). However, the Ministry of Labour is moving towards a philosophy based on career education which aims to reconcile the needs of the individual with the demands of the labour market. A ministry report published in 1991 identifies a number of qualities which career guidance should encourage in young people, including: the ability to hold down a job, flexibility, survival skills, the capacity to manage free time, and the awareness of other occupational or training possibilities. The primary responsibility, however, is divided between the national Ministry of Education, which makes policy for educational guidance through the school curriculum, and the 19 regions, which are responsible for vocational guidance, training opportunities outside the school system, and liaison with the labour market. The Ministry of Labour runs job placement services, although the line between these and career guidance is becoming increasingly blurred.

This division between educational and career guidance was enshrined in law nearly 20 years ago (DPR 616/77), when the Ministry of Labour decentralised vocational guidance to the regions, and following the legislation different regions have implemented different policies, corresponding to their own local development plans, and resulting in widely varying approaches to vocational guidance. In 1980, the Ministry of Labour created a General Directorate to co-ordinate vocational guidance in the regions, and develop links between regional offices, employers and schools. This approach has worked well in some regions, but less well in others. A large number of different bodies have some kind of interest in educational and career guidance in Italy.[28] As well as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the regional governments, they include:

- School districts, which have specific responsibility for carrying out educational guidance in the schools, but have little funding and even less organisational structure.
- The Regional Institutions for Research, Experimentation and Training (IRRSAE) are involved in the training of guidance workers in the school system, as are the provincial school authorities. They are staffed by university professors and school teachers who have been seconded from their academic posts for up to five years.
- The Ministry of University and Scientific Research: this establishment is responsible for the content of training courses for guidance workers, where they exist.
- The Ministry of Labour still provides some guidance through employment offices.
- Private agencies are an important source of career guidance for young people.
- Regional authorities are responsible for local youth policy, and operate a chain of provincial information centres for young people (*informagiovani*).
- Professional and industrial associations, trade unions, and voluntary sector organisations are extensively involved.

Primary and lower secondary school

The National Curriculum for primary schools and lower secondary schools (for children aged between six and 14) includes multiple references to guidance. It particularly emphasises the role of the middle (lower secondary) school in *orientamento* – developing children's sense of themselves, where they belong in their local community, what kind of upper secondary education would suit them, and what kind of adult role they would eventually like to play, including their occupation.

This type of guidance is seen as being integral to the maturation of an individual's personal and social identity, and to the development of his or her decision-making skills for the future. Teachers are responsible for organising a programme which develops appropriate skills, understanding and attitudes in their pupils. The whole developmental approach is highly desirable, but although this element of the curriculum is in theory compulsory, there is no way of making sure it happens in every school, and there is an acute shortage of teachers prepared to take the responsibility. Funding for guidance varies according to the different characteristics of each school district, and also the determination of individual school principals – as do the quality and quantity of teaching materials available. Some schools make use of leaflets and videos issued by the national Ministry of Education and the local career guidance services, but others do not. Consequently, what children actually experience at this stage is highly variable.

Upper secondary school

Although compulsory schooling ends after the middle school, more than 90 per cent of students go on to high schools – both public and private. This is a rise of three percentage points compared with five years ago. Currently, about a third go to academic schools, and two thirds to technical and vocational schools. There is now a trend – in common with the rest of Europe – towards developing a more general culture in high schools, leaving specialisation to post-diploma or further education.

Some technical and vocational schools are run by the regions, in an attempt to bring vocational education and training closer to the needs of the local labour market. This type of institution is becoming more popular, especially in tertiary education and in the south of the country, which is much less advantaged than the north. The role of the regions is strengthening in this area; in order to fill the gaps left by the national system, more and more of them are planning innovative interventions, especially with regard to training, which are then taken up and implemented by other institutions.

Although every upper secondary school teacher is supposed to offer guidance to his or her students, no-one is really responsible for it and there is no national curriculum at this level. Students do, of course, look for educational guidance, especially with regard to questions such as what course or combination of subjects they should take, or in relation to educational, emotional or social problems. Teachers advise them, but in many cases have no specialist knowledge either of counselling or of the labour market which their students will eventually enter. This is not to say that some teachers, in some schools, do not offer excellent guidance when requested, but on the whole, guidance at this level is treated more as emergency intervention rather than a way of preventing problems by making sound and reasoned decisions in good time.

In 1989, the Ministry of Education, faced with large numbers of surplus teachers, implemented a policy of appointing co-ordinators for guidance in upper secondary schools. The intention was that co-ordinators would work in schools, and would plan and co-ordinate all guidance activities through the curriculum, and through extra-curricula activities. They would also be responsible for collaborating with other relevant local agencies, disseminating information and guidance materials, and keep teachers informed of new initiatives. But lack of specialised training, funding and general understanding of what the co-ordinators were supposed to do, plus the fact that their numbers were limited to 20 per cent of surplus teachers, meant that the impact of the initiative was limited, except in particular school districts where unusually effective and energetic individuals were appointed.

Higher education

There are four types of university-level education in Italy: state universities (of which there are 42), polytechnics and technical colleges, private universities, and university institutes. Very large numbers of young people go to university in Italy. They have a right of entry if they have graduated successfully from high school,[29] and every effort is made to encourage them to go. This policy has had a generally positive effect, but also results in relatively high numbers of directionless or unmotivated university students in comparison with other countries. Some of these are in effect unemployed but are using university as a "waiting room" while they find a job or decide what else they want to do. Inevitably, drop-out rates are high, and of those who stay, only one in three succeeds in getting a degree within five years.

In an innovative attempt to help more disadvantaged students enter university, and succeed when they got there, the government in 1991 instituted the Right to Study initiative (*Diritto allo Studio*). Every university must have a Right to Study office, run by the local region, which liaises with upper secondary schools and offers guidance to students within the institution. This includes workshops and seminars on topics such as how to study, and one-to-one counselling in relation to educational issues such as subject choice, and also personal problems such as finance. Problems with traditional university courses are leading to increasing demand for new types of tertiary education covering two or three years after high school and leading to specific occupations. These are offered in the form of short university courses, high-level vocational training run by the regions, and post-diploma courses in the formal school system.

THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

There are three main transition points in the Italian system. The move from primary school is not seen as needing any special preparation, so the key transitions are between lower secondary and upper secondary school, between upper secondary school and tertiary education (whether this is vocational education or university), and between education and work.

Transition point 1

At the age of 14, having taken the first part of their Secondary School Diploma, most students move on to upper secondary schools for a further five-year course, either in the national system of high schools, or within the regional vocational system. A small proportion start work at this stage.

Before they make this choice, normally at the beginning of their third year in lower secondary (at 13 years of age), students are given advice concerning what type of high school is thought to be best for them. Teachers are legally required to offer guidance to young people who are facing this decision. There are three broad categories of school – academic, technical or vocational – but often there is an enormous choice of individual institution, so this can be a difficult decision. In Milan, for example, young people at this stage can choose between 60 and 70 schools, many of which specialise in different types of programme, and some of which prepare their pupils for specific careers.

The advice of most teachers at this stage tends to be traditional and not very sophisticated – although they are increasingly making use of various psychological and aptitude tests. Sometimes, though, teachers indicate a particular type of high school without necessarily really identifying the strengths, weaknesses and interests of the individual pupil. As a result, the more concerned parents tend not to see this advice as being conclusive. Families sometimes take their children to private assessment centres, where they can be given more detailed information and the young person's aptitudes and attitudes can be tested in order to build up a fuller picture of what kind of upper secondary school would be most appropriate.

Although in theory there is complete freedom of choice, in reality what often happens is that families' social background and expectations linked to social class take precedence over school-based guidance. So choices are not always made on a rational assessment of capabilities and attitudes, but are based on families' social and intellectual aspirations.

In consequence, upper and middle class families tend to enrol their children in academic types of high school, while others choose technical or professional institutes. As a result, inappropriate choices are sometimes made, and between 24 and 40 per cent of pupils in the more academic schools fail at the end of their first year and either change school or repeat the year.

Transition point 2

There is no national curriculum for upper secondary schools, so students do not necessarily get any educational and career guidance at this level unless they ask for it. They may get work experience in local companies, but this depends on the arrangements in place at their particular school. The greatest growth in this area is collaboration between high schools and industry to offer work shadowing and work experience to particularly high flying students. Exchange programmes mean that some students can join work experience schemes in other countries.

At the age of 18 or 19, upper secondary students must choose, broadly, whether to go to work or to university (although, as previously mentioned, post-diploma courses are becoming more popular). All who achieve the full high school diploma automatically have a right to a university place, and about threequarters of high school graduates usually start on degree courses (although only 40 per cent finally get a degree – suggesting that more effective guidance is sorely needed).

At this stage, schools are sometimes short of information on which students can base their next move. Both students and parents can approach the universities for information on both short and long courses. The university guidance services often liaise with local schools, organising visits, presentations and exhibitions. Information on post-diploma vocational courses is obtainable from the regional centres, which also offer advice, normally from especially trained staff.

Transition point 3

Young people who leave school very early often have jobs lined up already, sometimes in the informal economy. Since there is a clear division in Italy between education guidance and vocational or career guidance, schools often have little information on the local job market, and vocational guidance is mostly managed by the regions, who also run information and employment centres. They offer data on local job vacancies, training opportunities, unemployment rates in different areas, in some cases on computerised databases.

Most of their guidance budget is spent on producing and distributing information. They do not offer much individual counselling except when offering services to special social groups – drop-outs, women returners, handicapped people, immigrants, the unemployed and so on. Young workers in search of a job can also report to the Employment Offices run by the Ministry of Labour; these carry out job placement only. Private agencies are also available for advice, counselling and job placement.

Universities all have Right to Study offices, some of which help students to develop job-seeking skills such as filling in application forms, writing CVs and learning how to handle interviews. Some have forged links with local companies and play a well-developed job-placement role for their students (see case study). According to the law which underpins the *Diritto allo Studio*, all universities must introduce guidance tutors who will be responsible for supporting students through their courses (including the preparation of their theses), helping them with their CVs, and assisting them in planning a career strategy. University graduates can also use the services of the regional centres, the Employment Offices, and private agencies.

OTHER SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

The lack of a coherent guidance system in Italy has led to a much heavier involvement of non-statutory bodies than is true in other countries. A plethora of professional associations, trade unions and private centres offer educational and career guidance. Some notable examples are: the Rui Foundation (which has a long-standing commitment to career guidance, and offers research findings and information mainly at university level), Confederation of Industrial Companies (interventions aimed at easing the transition from school to work), *Centro Orientamento Scolastico Professionale Educativo Salesiano* (COSPES) and *Istituti Salesiani* (religious foundations which offer advice to young people and their families, often including psychological counselling), the Italian Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (AIOSP) (which deals mainly with research and study of guidance within the school system), and ISFOL (a study and research institute connected with Ministry of Labour which disseminates a wide variety of information on career guidance throughout the country including regular national reports).

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Initial teacher training has not traditionally been required in Italy – but the system is moving in that direction. Primary school teachers must have high school diplomas, secondary school teachers are normally graduates, all teachers learn on the job, and train through in-service courses. There are no officially recognised qualifications for educational or career guidance – in principle anyone could set up as a counsellor. But in reality most of them are psychologists, teachers, sociologists, and others with a social science qualification – although some have simply built up experience in the field. Specialist guidance courses are run by universities, school districts, professional associations and various private and voluntary organisations, but even those which take place in universities (for example, a well-respected two-to-three year course at the Catholic University of Milan) have no official status.

Staff in the regional offices are usually psychologists or experienced administrators; they are normally recruited and trained through meetings and seminars held by the regions. All regions have an organisational framework to administer these centres – which are becoming more and more significant in supplementing the offering of the formal school system. In Lombardy, this system is called CITE (the Centres for Technological and Educational Innovation).

EVALUATION

There is no overall evaluation of the success of educational or vocational guidance, although individual schools, universities and regional centres may carry out surveys of student satisfaction. Identifying and disseminating good practice should be a key priority.

CONCLUSION

Although the picture of educational and career guidance in Italy is so fragmented, most of the necessary elements for a good system are present. Schools do, by and large, try to treat educational guidance as a lifelong process rather than simply a question of emergency intervention, and there are more and more good examples of real initiatives and activities which educate children on how to make choices, even if the average still leaves much to be desired. But teachers, headteachers and school districts need to work together more closely, and liaise with outside sources of information such as the regional centres. Upper secondary schools, in particular, need up-to-date data on local labour markets.

Although guidance is highly recommended in policy statements, there are no real provisions made by the Ministry of Education. The regions are now beginning to make the running, but so far have not managed to create a culture within which publicly-funded guidance and counselling is seen as an individual right. Informal arrangements continue to be the norm.

In the recognition that implementation rather than policy itself is the problem, there is now a trend towards trying to improve delivery of guidance and counselling on the ground – especially in universities, where some of the most obvious dysfunctions occur – rather than seeking to change policies at the legislative level. Indeed, innovation in Italy is often driven by a localised, project-oriented approach. European programmes are also having an effect, since they require a degree of consistency and monitoring, looking, for example, for evidence of clear guidance procedures which ease the transition from school to work. This element of "external direction" seems to be benefiting the Italian system of vocational education by pressurising it into identifying significant outcomes.

The most obvious aspect which should be addressed is staffing. Many schools currently have neither properly trained and identified guidance teachers, nor specific professionals, nor even specially appointed teachers who could act as facilitators. There are no tutors who can guarantee pupils a personal relationship with a member of staff, let alone real counselling if necessary. A workable framework needs to be devised, with defined standards of competence for staff, as well as effective training for guidance teachers, but the problem will not be solved just by spending more money on training courses, so long as basic organisational problems persist.

Case Studies

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF MILAN

This private university, which has 36 000 students, is one of seven universities in Lombardy Region, all of which are competing for students (although not necessarily in the same subjects). Most of the students in this university are from Milan and its environs, and live at home. The university offers three different types of guidance.

i) Institute for the Right to University Study

Every university has one of these offices, which is funded and staffed by the region – in this case, Lombardy. It runs an information service for students which is about to be computerised, offers individual psychological counselling, and organises optional courses (on study skills, for example).

It is also responsible for liaising with upper secondary schools in the region, and organises different activities under this heading:

- visits by upper secondary students to the university and its different departments, normally on special open days;
- leafleting of all the high schools in the region advertising a university-based programme aimed at helping students to make choices after high school;
- visits to upper secondary schools by university personnel – if the school requests this;
- forming links with individual guidance teachers in the schools (for example, the university had 30 meetings with teachers during the first six months of the 1994/95 academic year);
- helping individual students and their families to make choices with regard to higher education, and identifying sources of funding for disadvantaged students;
- operating a telephone advice line.

ii) University Psychological Service

This department of the university – the only university psychology department in Milan – operates a Students' Advice Bureau – in conjunction with the advice service referred to above. It mainly focuses on offering educational guidance to young people and their parents – often concerning the transfer to upper secondary school. Choice is very complicated at this stage: in Milan, for example, there is a free choice of between 50 and 60 schools. Every year, the psychological service tests 1 000 to 1 500 students for ability, aptitudes and interests, and advises them and their parents as to what types of schools they should go to. This service costs the parents 180 000 lire – although if an entire school class comes, the cost is reduced.

In 1994, in response to demand, the bureau began a service for students within the university. If they need help with problems such as examination nerves, they can have a small amount of counselling – often from older students. Four or five in each department are paid a modest sum for acting as peer tutors.

iii) Company Links Committee

This pioneering university-based project, which is funded by local industries, was founded ten years ago. It now has 70 high-profile companies involved, the aim being twofold: to help students bridge the gap between university study and the working world, and to enable companies to try out possible new recruits.

Students can become involved in the scheme at several different levels: they can simply ask for information from the committee's database; in their final year they can ask for a meeting to be set up with someone working in an area in which they are interested, personnel management, say, or information technology; finally – if accepted – they can do a three-month period of training and work experience in one of the participating companies. About 100 complete one of these "stages" every year.

Since 2 400 students graduate each year in three sessions, and jobs are hard to find, this can become an employers' market. The committee circulates a list of all final year students to the participating companies, suggesting that they try them out for two months. It is currently setting up a database of graduating students grouped by department, with information about each individual, which will be available to companies on request. Final university examinations generally are competitive, and the higher up the final list a student is, the more choice of occupation he or she will have.

The government-funded regional vocational advisors also make use of the scheme, sending representatives of different public sector jobs (teaching, the civil service, local government administration, the police, the magistracy) to the university to meet students, answer their questions, and in some cases arrange work experience.

HIGH SCHOOL "C.E. GADDA" *(Istituto tecnico statale commerciale)*

This upper secondary school on the outskirts of Milan has about 770 students aged between 14 and 19. It specialises in languages, administration and commerce.

and focuses strongly on vocational preparation. The school's guidance department is responsible for educational and career guidance, one-to-one counselling for specific problems, and compulsory courses on health and personal development.[30] Most students (especially those who have not already decided on language-oriented careers) are given psychometric tests to assess characteristics such as their aptitudes, motivation, attention span and learning strategies.

Preparation for the transition to work has several different elements. The school has a committee of teachers who are responsible for forming links with local employers – about a dozen companies are involved. At the end of the second year, all students have their first experience of the world of work, normally through a one-to-three week placement with a community organisation – a local co-operative, perhaps, or a leisure centre. During the summer holidays, groups of pupils who are specialising in administration and commerce are distributed among local companies. In the February of their final year, students who want to move straight into work, rather than going to university, have interviews with local companies; in April school leavers are invited to a meeting with public sector employers organised by the region (Lombardy in this case); in May, they attend a careers fair.

The school counsellor, originally a French teacher, has trained herself for her role through independent study. She is keenly committed to her guidance activities, which take up about 22 hours a week. Normally, she is available on one day a week for private interviews, which the students tend to ask for spontaneously – although they may be referred by their class co-ordinator or their parents. Most of their anxieties are related to their studies, social adjustment, friendships, and family problems. The counsellor reports back to the class co-ordinator, and alerts the young person's parents. If they feel that they can handle the difficulty, the counsellor will not intervene further.

JAPAN

Will changes in the labour market increase the need for guidance?

OVERVIEW

In comparison with other countries, the transition between school and work in Japan has until recently been a relatively smooth process. Educational and career guidance in the schools is carried out by teachers who often have little specialist training, and only a limited amount of time to perform their guidance duties. The vocational guidance officers who work in the Public Employment Security Offices are usually civil servants who perform this function for a period as part of their administrative careers.

This structure is linked to Japan's deeply embedded tradition of "flexible specialisation". In Japanese companies, white-collar workers in particular are expected to move flexibly between jobs with different skill requirements. The upper secondary schools (unless they are specifically vocational) concentrate on giving their students a sound general education, and most of them limit vocational preparation to instilling positive attitudes to work. Having selected new recruits on the basis of their general characteristics, the employers are normally responsible for training their own workforce. This division of labour has a marked effect not only on the structure of educational and career guidance but also on its content. Specifically, educational guidance and career guidance are seen as two very different issues: the latter is much less important than in many other national systems, because young people are not necessarily choosing "careers" as such.

In spite of the relatively low degree of specialisation within the guidance system, there is considerable emphasis on standardised tests (which in other countries tend to be regarded as one of the most highly professionalised guidance activities). This is linked to the importance attached by the Japanese to institutional entrance examinations in the highly competitive selection procedures for entry both to post-compulsory education institutions and to companies. An important part of the guidance process is to help students to decide which entrance examinations to take. In this and other ways, guidance operates quite overtly as a pre-selection filter

The Japanese education and labour market systems do not interpenetrate one another as much as they do in some other countries, but they are closely harmonised all the same. Levels of unemployment are currently causing concern, but are still very low by international standards (2.9 per cent in April 1995) – partly because employers are seen as having a responsibility to their workers and try not to lay them off, even if the result is a certain amount of underemployment. In this structured and rather paternalistic context, the transition to working life has until recently been relatively unproblematic for most young people. Guidance services may seem rather undeveloped in comparison to those of other countries, but this is because the destiny of most young people is dictated by their performance in the tests, and their aim is normally to join certain companies rather than particular occupations.

Economic and demographic changes, however, are beginning to have an impact on traditional career patterns in Japan. Increasing attention is now being paid to individuality – linked to greater flexibility and diversity of educational provision (particularly at the upper secondary school level). The Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Monbusho) has proposed reforms which will shift the focus of career guidance in Japan from the traditional "matching" model to a more developmental process. As a result, guidance services in Japan are likely to be more significant in the future than they have been up until now.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

The guidance system within education is closely integrated into the school and college system. Elementary and lower secondary schools are usually run by municipalities. At the upper secondary level, the structure is more mixed: some schools are run by prefectures, some by municipalities, and some by private foundations. Colleges and universities too are located in several different sectors: many are private, but some are state institutions and a few are run by prefectures. The role of guidance within the school system is mandated by regulation: every school must have a career guidance teacher. But there is some scope for the relevant authorities and the schools themselves to decide exactly how such guidance should be provided.

The responsibility for placing individuals in jobs belongs to the Ministry of Labour, which mainly carries out this function through its network of Public Employment Security Offices. These are administered at prefectural level (although the staff are employed by the ministry) and under the terms of the Employment Security Law – which includes provision for vocational guidance. However, schools or colleges perform the primary job placement function for most of their students. The Ministry of Labour also provides a separate vocational rehabilitation service which offers counselling and training to handicapped young people and adults, again administered at prefectural level.[31]

Elementary school

The basis of the educational guidance system in Japan is the network of "homeroom teachers," each of whom has responsibility for a group of students. In the elementary schools (for children aged from 6 to 12), the homeroom teachers handle all aspects of educational and personal guidance for their pupils and their parents. Career guidance is not offered at this early stage.

Lower secondary school

In the lower secondary school (which caters for pupils aged between 12 and 15) the homeroom teachers each have responsibility for a group of between 35 and 40 students. These groups usually meet for a ten-minute session every morning, which is used for distributing information – on timetables and school events, for example – and for disciplinary purposes. More specific guidance normally takes place on a group basis once a week, in a longer 15-minute homeroom period. These teachers are also expected to offer individual guidance to pupils in their group whenever they request it.

Official policy, enshrined in the School Law of 1953, is for the homeroom teachers to be supported by a career guidance teacher. In practice, the member of staff who is head of year for the third grade usually performs this role. Because this teacher, like the homeroom teachers, normally stays with his or her group of pupils throughout their school career, this role tends to rotate each year – which can make it hard for individuals to build up specialist knowledge and experience within the field of guidance.

An increasingly common practice is to have a team of career guidance teachers. Each of these spends some time in the career guidance room, where publications and other resources are kept, and is available for consultation. Usually, however, only the head of the team will have any extra non-teaching periods for this work, and even then the number of such periods will be very limited. Guidance of this type is seen as one of the extra-curricular activities (including sport) which all teachers are expected to take on.

Alongside the career guidance provision, but separate from it, is a strand of general guidance which is chiefly concerned with administrative and disciplinary matters. In some schools there is also a teacher-counsellor who is expected to deal with problems, and with difficult and emotionally-disturbed pupils. Currently, a new experimental system of specialised "school counsellors" is being set up in each municipality. Each will service a group of schools, working with students who have behavioural problems.

Upper secondary school

The guidance system in Japanese upper secondary schools is broadly similar to that at lower secondary level. Again it is based on a structure of homeroom teachers, supported by a team of career guidance teachers. At this level, however, the career guidance team is usually divided into two sections: one is for students who are planning to continue their education, and the other is for those who intend to leave school and enter the labour market. This second group of teachers works closely with the Public Employment Security Offices, and are often very influential in finding good positions for their students. The balance between these two groups varies according to the type of upper secondary school.

Traditionally, the 5 000-plus upper secondary schools have fallen into two categories: general schools, focused mainly on university and college entry; and vocational schools, focused mainly on job entry. As in other countries, the general schools enjoy a higher reputation than the vocational schools, and tend to be preferred by students and parents alike. Virtually all students in the top 25 per cent of the ability range go to general high schools. As a result, some vocational schools have experienced recruitment problems.[32] This, linked to the rigidity of the traditional Japanese system, has encouraged the government to introduce various experimental reforms, many of which offer more scope for student choice. These measures include the introduction of credit-based systems (see case study A) and the extension of options in some vocational schools to make them more attractive (see case study B). Increased choice of this kind has the effect of raising the demand for educational and vocational guidance, and giving more weight to its role in the system.

There are also a number of new "integrated" schools – actively promoted by Monbusho – which bring together general and vocational courses, and allow much greater flexibility of choice between them. Students can combine modules from different disciplines, and work on projects of various kinds which could include work experience, which is rare in Japanese secondary schools. Seven such schools were founded in 1994, a further 16 in 1995, and others are planned. These schools include a compulsory first-year course on "industrial society and human beings", designed to foster the skills and attitudes students will need as they make employment choices and proceed through their working lives. The course aims to provide students with a clearer awareness of their own career paths, and to help them choose appropriate programmes and fields of study within the integrated school structure. It will be interesting to see whether in time this course is extended to other types of school. The curriculum of the integrated schools also includes a compulsory final-year "project study" designed (among other things) to encourage students to think about their "approach to life" – including career choices. But this initiative is as yet rather limited in scope; less than one per cent of upper secondary students is currently in an integrated school.

Universities and colleges

Virtually all universities and colleges in Japan have job placement offices, usually staffed by clerical workers who have had little or no training in guidance. Their role is to collate and display the standardised vacancy information received from employers. They may also provide mass briefing sessions for students, and arrange talks by employers or outside experts and visits by students to companies. Employers recruiting new graduates often require recommendations from the university placement offices or from professors. This "pre-selection" function carried out by the university may be handled informally, or through a formal process of pre-selection interviews and examinations. The older and more sought-after universities tend to have strongly-established links with major employers, but newer and less prestigious institutions are often not notified of vacancies.

Only limited guidance is available for students who require more basic assistance in thinking about their career. It is interesting to note that those universities which run training courses in career guidance for secondary school teachers often find that a number of other students from within the university enrol on such courses in order to get help with their own career decision-making.

Public Employment Security Offices

Job placement work is largely carried out by or through the national network of 631 Public Employment Security Offices (PESO). Private employment agencies are only licensed to operate in a number of restricted occupational areas. Employers are not however obliged to register vacancies with the PESO. In practice, more varied recruitment methods tend to be used for older workers than for entry-level jobs.

Upper secondary schools in Japan have the option of taking over responsibility for placement from the PESO, and around 95 per cent take advantage of this opportunity. In these cases, vacancy information is passed to the schools. In the case of the other 5 per cent, most of which are general schools, students seeking jobs may visit the PESO office, or PESO officers may visit the school.

Around 4 000 of the 12 500 staff working in these employment offices are termed vocational guidance officers. They offer briefing sessions for teachers and for students on the labour-market situation, and arrange for the General Aptitude Test Battery to be administered to job-seekers in upper secondary schools. Some follow-up work is carried out by officers to monitor young people's progress in the world of work and help them to adjust, especially with recruits to smaller companies.

At tertiary level, Japanese employers traditionally notify vacancies direct to the institutions, but junior colleges, and some of the newer and less prestigious universities, secure only limited vacancy information in this way. Accordingly, six Student Employment Centres have been set up in large cities, aimed at current students and at recent graduates (see case study C). There are also 12 centres for women returners, 135 for part-time workers, and 15 for older workers. These separate centres are designed to provide a more focused and positive image than the typical PESO office and offer a more individualised service.

The mainstream placement work of the PESOs, which is on an all-age basis, is with individuals outside the educational system. For example, of new registrants in October 1993, 25 per cent were aged under 25, 43 per cent were between 25 and 45, and 32 per cent were over 45. In addition to the placement work with individuals, PESO officials are expected to take the initiative in contacting employers (especially small- and medium-sized organisations) to find out about job vacancies. They are also responsible for administering employment insurance and the various forms of subsidy intended to encourage employers to hire more older and disabled workers, and to avoid laying-off workers as a result of business fluctuations.

THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

The Japanese education system has been described as a "6+3+3+4 system", *i.e.* six years of elementary school (from the ages of six to 12); three years of lower secondary schools (ages 12 to 15); three years of upper secondary school (ages 15 to 18); and up to four years of higher education (ages 18 to 22). The first two stages are compulsory, and staying-on rates in the later stages are very high by international standards. In 1993, 96 per cent of the cohort graduated from upper secondary school – the drop-out rate is very low. And nearly 60 per cent of upper secondary school graduates went on to universities or tertiary education of some kind. There are thus three key transition points: at ages 12, 15 and 18.

Transition point 1

The transition at 12 is treated as relatively unproblematic. Most pupils move directly from their local elementary school to their local lower secondary school, which is normally comprehensive. Liaison between the two types of school is close, and few problems of choice or transition arise.

Transition point 2

The transition at 15 is much more complex and significant. Less than 4 per cent of young people start work at this stage, and the choice of school for the majority who are staying in the system has considerable implications for their future career prospects. At upper secondary level, the private sector plays an important role. In 1992, 29 per cent of upper secondary pupils were enrolled in private schools, as opposed to 4 per cent at lower secondary level. Schools at this level are also much more diverse, and tend to be ranked according to their examination results, and their success in getting their pupils into the most prestigious universities. About one in four young people moves into vocational schools at this stage.

Since private upper secondary schools have their own entrance examinations, an important role for homeroom teachers has always been to advise individual pupils which of these examinations they should enter, taking into account their preferences and those of their parents. The public upper secondary schools share a common achievement test within each prefecture; but each school decides on its particular cut-off score and its own additional entry criteria. As a result, guidance attention in lower secondary schools tends to focus on the screening standards of each upper secondary school, and the extra documentation it requires. Such advice has hitherto been based largely on matching the personal standard scores of the students with the cut-off levels of individual upper secondary schools. These are derived from commercially-published achievement tests which are normally administered by the career guidance teachers. Academic achievement in these tests is the key criterion for selection – on the assumption that it reflects personal qualities such as conscientiousness and perseverance as well as intellectual ability.

Recently, however, the use of such tests has been prohibited by the Ministry of Education, linked to the government's attempts to offer students better educational guidance in choosing their future school (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1994). The role of guidance is accordingly being encouraged to broaden beyond this narrow achievement-matching model. But moving towards guidance for effective choices will take time; currently there is concern, for example, that students who want to take "integrated" courses do not always receive adequate guidance on which modules or programmes to choose. Those who have designed the courses admit that many teachers lack the expertise to advise young people on which options to take – particularly in relation to what would be acceptable to a university. Both tertiary institutions and parents show signs of feeling more secure with the traditional curriculum.

Transition point 3

Traditionally, many general upper secondary schools have focused mainly on entry to universities and colleges, and vocational schools mainly on job entry. Now, however, these categories are becoming more fluid. More opportunities are currently being opened up for college entry direct from the vocational schools; conversely, more general-course students are beginning to consider earlier entry to the workplace. For example, over one in three vocational students now advances to tertiary education, whereas 20 years ago the proportion was less than 10 per cent. These changes are reinforced by the government-initiated reforms described above, which are designed to achieve greater diversity and flexibility, but are still rather limited in reach.

When students who are graduating from upper secondary school (whether general or vocational) want to move directly into jobs, their guidance teachers often play an active role in placing them with companies. Formal recruitment normally takes place during a particular week in September. Teachers often visit local enterprises in order to find placements which suit their students' interests and abilities. Normally, a student only applies to one company, which usually has been chosen by his or her teacher. Most guidance teachers neither have nor require detailed knowledge of the skills needed for different jobs; since the employers themselves will train new recruits, personal qualities are considered more important, and teachers' recommendations are taken very seriously. Young people – particularly drop-outs – who do not take part in this process are severely disadvantaged in the competition for jobs. Those who have attended highly academic general high schools may also have problems, since their guidance teachers are more oriented towards getting their charges into university than towards finding them jobs. Generally, they tend to end up in less rewarding jobs than their contemporaries who attended vocational high schools, mainly because of poor advice and a weaker preparation for working life.

For universities and colleges, as for the upper secondary schools themselves, entrance is largely through the institution's own entrance examinations. The wider range of choice at tertiary level, and the higher proportion of private institutions, mean that the traditional process of strict achievement-matching survives more strongly at this stage. An important feature of career guidance rooms in upper secondary schools is an enormous collection of past examination papers for various institutions, alongside prospectuses and general guides. A key role of the career guidance teachers and homeroom teachers is to advise students on which examinations to enter, in order to maximise their chances of being accepted by a university. Schools' recommendations are also given considerable weight by some universities and colleges.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

A two-credit course on guidance and counselling (*i.e.* around 90 minutes per week for about 12 weeks) is now a mandatory part of the secondary teacher certificate. But since in Japan there is a strong distinction between educational counselling and career guidance, this type of course is often taught by university teachers with little experience of labour-market matters, and tends to place strong emphasis on psychological measurement. In reality, however, as mentioned above, teachers can be very influential in placing their pupils in companies.

The Ministry of Education, the prefectures and municipalities all run short courses lasting three to five days for career guidance teachers. In practice, however, not all these teachers go on such courses. The methods used within the courses have in the past been largely didactic, but efforts are now being made to make them more practical and skill-focused. A new four-day course has been developed and set up for teachers in the integrated upper secondary schools who are responsible for the new courses on "industrial society and human beings" (see above). If the integrated schools movement gathers momentum, more extended provision will be needed here.

In higher education, the student placement service is mainly staffed by clerical workers who are transferred into this work for a couple of years, with no special professional training. The vocational guidance officers in the PESOs have usually had at least ten years' experience as civil servants. They are often then rotated to other administrative posts. Staff in the vocational rehabilitation service have had a more specialised professional training, including a degree in psychology, education or social welfare, followed by a one-year postgraduate course.

A few longer courses in school counselling (up to one year full-time or two years part-time) have been set up, partly to train "school counsellors" to work at municipality level. These have attracted some teachers who have subsequently worked in schools (see case study A). They usually, however, concentrate on individual therapeutic counselling for emotional and behavioural problems, and pay only limited attention to educational and vocational guidance.

EVALUATION

Within the school system, there is no specific provision for monitoring and evaluating the quality of career guidance provision. For historical reasons, the official responsibility for career guidance within the Ministry of Education lies within the Division of Vocational Education. The Division is responsible for general policy in this area. Although there is some scope for diversity of practice within the school system, the tradition is for innovation to be largely top-down in nature.

The PESO offices are administered by the prefectures, but report regularly to the Ministry of Labour. They offer a largely standardised service, with relatively little attention paid to the quality of outcomes for individuals.

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CONCLUSION

The guidance system in Japan possesses a number of distinctive features, including:

- the emphasis on testing, linked to achievement-matching focused more on level than on field;
- the focus on choice of organisation rather than choice of occupation;
- the system's strong pre-selection role.

It is not easy to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the guidance system in Japan, because its main characteristics are linked so closely to distinctive features of the Japanese culture, its social and economic structure, and its labour market, so they are hard to evaluate in an international context. In particular, many are linked to the tradition of secure and loyal employment within a single organisation, in which workers are prepared to move flexibly between jobs requiring different skills, and the organisation takes considerable responsibility for training and retraining. This explains the greater importance attached to choice of organisation than of occupation, and the resistance to strong professionalisation in guidance provision itself. At the same time, the paternalistic cultural tradition explains the emphasis on pre-selection linked to psychometric testing.

Elements of this structure are however beginning to change, and corresponding changes are appearing in the guidance system. The impact of economic and technological change means that there is growing mobility between organisations, a shift in employment patterns from large companies to small- and medium-sized organisations, and greater concern for portability of qualifications. There is also greater emphasis on individuality – reflected, for example, in the upper secondary school reforms. Accordingly, there is growing recognition of the need to help students to develop their own "life purposes" and decision-making skills, in order to enable them to cope with unpredictable economic change and take more responsibility for their career development.

At the same time, such changes do not seem to have significantly affected the higher-status part of the educational system. Until they do so, their capacity to influence the system as a whole will be limited.

Paradoxically, despite its general level of technological sophistication, Japan lags behind other advanced industrialised countries in its application of computers to guidance delivery. So far, the use of computers in guidance has been restricted to very limited experimental usage (see case study C). This is partly explicable in terms of the lack of focus on occupational choice. The usual explanation offered for this lack of development is that the use of computers risks disrupting the interpersonal relationship which is the essence of the guidance process. Yet in reality only limited attention seems to be given to this relationship in training provision for guidance staff – one of the reasons why this training provision is so brief and patchy.

A key issue for the future is whether occupations – or even a structure based directly on portable qualifications – become the new basis for inter-organisational mobility in Japan as in other countries. If they do, there will be a need to develop new information structures which can provide the basis for an enhanced role for guidance services.

Case Studies

CASE STUDY A: SHINJUKU YAMABUKI HIGH SCHOOL, TOKYO

Shinjuku Yamabuki High School is a new upper secondary school founded in 1991. It has 1 218 students, of whom 379 are correspondence students. The school has been designed using an innovative credit-based approach – to provide more flexibility than the traditional rigid grade-based system in which all students move up together from year to year. Of the 80 credits required for graduation, 40 are compulsory but 40 are chosen by the student, and there is considerable flexibility of time-tabling. The 839 full-time students are divided into four groups who study at different times of the day, so that students can combine part-time jobs and other activities with their studies. Around 70 per cent of the students have transferred, for various reasons, from other upper secondary schools; there are also some adult students. Most of the curriculum consists of general (*i.e.* academic) courses, but there is a vocational course on information technology.

Because of the more flexible curriculum structure, and the nature of the student body, this school pays considerable attention to guidance. The 48 homeroom teachers are each responsible for fewer than 20 students (rather than the usual 35-40). They meet their groups for between 30 and 60 minutes every month, but also see each individual once or twice per semester to review their academic and personal progress. These homeroom teachers are supported by a team of 11 career guidance teachers – but none of these has any reduction of teaching hours. Unusually, the school also has two full-time school counsellors on its staff. Both have attended one-year specialist training courses, and their role is mainly personal and therapeutic counselling – though they do provide some career counselling to students with particularly complex problems.

Before students enter the school, they attend a two-day pre-entry session which consists of group talks and individual interviews to help them plan their course of studies. When they start, a ten-day orientation course is provided, one day of which is devoted to talks on future career and study options, and is aimed at helping students use their time fruitfully.

Each year, students are tested using a battery of commercially-produced tests. They have to pay for these tests, and about one in ten choose not to take them. The results are fed back to students through the homeroom teachers, the school counsellors run a training session for them on test interpretation. In addition, students are given practice in taking the entrance examinations for various universities, colleges and companies.

There is no permanent programme of group guidance, but throughout the year there are occasional half-day visits to colleges and companies, as well as talks from their representatives – especially during two special Advice Days (one for all students in the school, and the other especially for those who are leaving).

CASE STUDY B: NIIZA COMPREHENSIVE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL, SAITAMA PREFECTURE

Niiza Comprehensive Technical High School is a vocational upper secondary school with 859 full-time students. It offers a much greater variety of courses than do most such schools, including an extended two-year college-level course in industrial design. It also provides a flexible enhanced curriculum, with much more choice than is usual. Students have to secure 90 credits to graduate, of which 22 can be "electives". These optional subjects are aimed at broadening young people's experience by enabling them to range outside their normal field of study – though they still remain in the "track" or "stream" they opted for when they entered the school. The opportunity to choose subjects or programmes in other vocational as well as general areas means that students will have more options available to them when they graduate from the school.

Most of the guidance related students' vocational specialisms is provided by the relevant subject teachers. This is reinforced in some courses by the use of part-time industrial tutors, whose role is to strengthen links with the world of work. During the first two years, the homeroom groups contain a mixture of students from different courses; but in the third year the groups are course-based. This means in this crucial final year a student's homeroom teacher is usually a teacher who specialises in his or her vocational field.

The head of the career guidance team at the school has one or two extra non-teaching periods per week – but the eight other members of the team do not. They are divided into two groups – four of them focused on college guidance, and four on entry into work – and are expected to provide more detailed help than the subject teachers and homeroom teachers.

Early in their final year, students are asked for a statement of their intentions; an information session is also held for parents. The students and their parents then have an interview with the homeroom teacher. Information on job vacancies and college entrance are provided on open access in the career guidance room, but the career guidance teachers check on the realism and appropriateness of students' choices. In relation to jobs, for example, the guidance teacher, the homeroom teacher and the head of year meet to decide which students should be encouraged to apply for which jobs. This pre-selection function is seen as a way of reducing failure and maintaining good relations with employers.

CASE STUDY C: TOKYO STUDENT EMPLOYMENT CENTRE

The Student Employment Centre in Tokyo is one of two pioneering centres originally established in 1976 alongside a similar centre in Osaka, and now one of six such centres. It is basically a placement service, but has a stronger counselling component than a typical PESO. The service is designed on an open-access basis; vacancies are classified by geographical area, by industrial sector, by gender and by type of college or university. Other resources include a video library and a limited amount of computer-based guidance – still experimental as yet. (These include two tests to identify students' interests – with printed guides on how to interpret the results – and two decision-making games.)

The service is staffed by six vocational guidance officers and nine part-time vocational advisers, most of whom are specially-recruited retired PESO workers or high school principals; four or five are available at any particular time. Interviews with individuals normally last about 20 minutes. In 1994 the centre dealt with 12 000 clients: 10 per cent of these had already graduated, and the rest were current students.

MEXICO
Adding the career element to educational guidance

OVERVIEW

The education system in Mexico is vast and complex, like the country. Within the OECD, only Canada, the United States and Australia are bigger in area, and Mexico's population, at 93 million, is only surpassed by the United States and Japan. About a quarter of the population lives in the capital, Mexico City, and the rest inhabit the other 30 states, some of which are sparsely populated. Compulsory schooling officially lasts for nine years, but in reality large numbers of children do not go to school regularly, especially in their teens.

All the same, education in Mexico has made great strides since the revolution in 1910, at which time nearly four out of five Mexicans were illiterate. By 1990, the adult illiteracy rate had been reduced to about 11 per cent, and today the average Mexican has received seven years of schooling. But the enormous numbers involved still make educating the population adequately an onerous task. Nearly 30 per cent of the population is aged between 5 and 14, and 12 per cent between 15 and 19. Currently, over 25 million students are being educated in nearly 160 000 public and private schools, colleges and universities across the country – well over a million of them in higher education.

Educational guidance has a long history in Mexico, but vocational guidance aimed at easing young people into the job market is relatively new. Although a broader conceptualisation of *orientación educativa* is beginning to take root among education policy makers, attempts to set up a coherent framework have been only partially successful, and liaison between the education and labour authorities is not well-developed.

In a recently decentralised system lacking reliable overall figures, it is hard to make accurate generalisations, but it is probably fair to say that as yet such guidance currently touches only a minority of young people. Most of the guidance effort is currently being put in at the upper secondary stage, and in universities. However, the recent establishment of a compulsory element of educational guidance, integrated into the lower secondary school curriculum, shows that policy makers recognise that too many young people are being lost to the system at a relatively early stage and puts Mexico among the small number of countries which offer mandatory guidance at this stage.

Overall the picture is of a wide range of useful services in Mexico City, some examples of excellent practice in individual institutions, a real effort by policy makers to translate their plans into reality on the ground – and a sprawling and immensely complex system with no real tools for monitoring or controlling what is going on.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

Educational guidance, related to academic progress, has been practised in Mexican schools and universities for 70 years or so, but efforts to combine it with vocational or career guidance are relatively new. As a result, in comparison with some other countries, educational and career guidance in Mexico is very much in the hands of educational institutions. The Ministry of Employment plays only a small role in guiding young people – concentrating mainly on the needs of adults.

The compulsory education system in Mexico lasts for nine years: six years of primary schooling are followed by a three-year programme in a lower secondary school. At around the age of 14 (the compulsory school leaving age), young people either enter the job market or transfer to upper secondary schools. At 18 or 19 those who graduate from these schools have the right to a university place. The drop-out rate at every stage is, by OECD standards, rather high.

Currently, the whole system is in the throes of change. In 1921, the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) was established to administer the education system on the centralised French model, but over the past two years education has been decentralised. The 31 states are now in the process of taking over the financing and administration of their own systems – including educational and career guidance. The SEP still controls 20 000 schools in the Mexico City metropolitan area, and is responsible for designing national curricula and plan, supervise and evaluate the whole system.

The SEP includes the National System for Educational Guidance (SNOE),[11] founded in the 1960s, when there was a boom in the creation of educational guidance departments in schools throughout the country. Its original objectives were to define and co-ordinate a programme for educational guidance and counselling at the national level, to establish councils in the states for the organisation of local services, and to produce and develop useful materials for teachers and guidance workers all over the country.

Since decentralisation, the states have taken over the responsibility for educational guidance, so the system's role is now limited to supporting schools and guidance workers in the metropolitan area of Mexico City. The current aim is to improve the young people's academic performance by reducing both drop-out rates and repetition[34] through adequate guidance, and to improve the distribution of students across different specialist courses by giving appropriate advice.

Some career guidance is also offered by the National Employment Service, which is run by the Ministry of Labour as a national system, but administered locally. It is responsible for 99 Employment Centres – some of which employ career counsellors – offering a specialised job placement service to adults who are seeking employment. Until recently, the service took a passive stance, mainly restricted to fulfilling supervisory functions; but it has now adopted active employment policies, including the promotion of training programmes.

Primary schools

Basic schooling in Mexico officially begins with one year of pre-school: this is optional, but still covers nearly two thirds of the age group. Most children start primary school at the age of six and follow a six-year basic curriculum which is established centrally by the SEP, but may be adapted by the states. There is some educational guidance at this level, normally one-to-one counselling by mainstream teachers for students with academic problems. More serious difficulties may be dealt with by the education psychology service.

Lower secondary schools

Normally, pupils in lower secondary schools are aged between 12 and 15 or 16. They follow a three-year programme designed to prepare them for various types of higher secondary school (*bachilleratos*). Most of them are in general or technical schools, but some students in rural areas are enrolled in "televised schools" which use distance learning methods. In Mexico as a whole, some 4 200 000 students – about 40 per cent of the age group – are in school at this level. The rest have already entered the job market.

In the 1994-95 school year, *orientación educativa* was for the first time made a compulsory subject in the curriculum of the third year of lower secondary school. It is embedded in a general programme of personal development, which includes: health issues; adolescence and sexuality; study skills; the student's understanding of his or her interests, aptitudes and ambitions; and careers education.

Higher secondary schools

There are two main categories of education at this level (normally for students aged between 15 or 16 and about 20). One type specialises in preparing students for university, and the other offers vocational education leading to a specific occupation. The total upper secondary enrolment is about 2 000 000 (roughly three quarters in university preparation, and a quarter in vocational education). This represents about 22 per cent of the age group.

The higher secondary school system in Mexico is enormously complex, and there is a very wide range of types of school or college – offering over 200 different programmes. Mexico is unique in that many of the upper secondary schools which prepare students for entrance to various universities are in fact part of the relevant university – funded and staffed by it, and seen as an important element in its activities. This makes for stiff competition to get into certain upper secondary schools, since they offer a direct route into the university.

Upper secondary schools mostly fall into three categories:

- General schools (*bachilleratos*), which offer an academic programme as a preparation for university; about 60 per cent of higher secondary students go to these schools. Even within this category there are three different types of school: the *preparatoria* (or university preparatory schools), which are usually owned and controlled by the universities themselves and which tend to teach a traditional curriculum; the *colegios de ciencias y humanidades* (colleges of science and humanities), which were founded in the 1970s to offer a broader, more adventurous curriculum based on active learning principles, and are also controlled by universities; and a wide range of *colegios de bachilleres*, *i.e.* higher secondary schools administered by the federal or the state governments.
- Bivalent schools (*bachilleratos tecnologicos*). These are schools in which it is possible to take a technical course which will lead to technological higher education, or to qualify as a technician and move straight into work. Typically, the latter qualify as industrial, agricultural or marine technicians. About 20 per cent of upper secondary students go to these schools, which are usually controlled by the National Polytechnic Institute, or are part of National Technology Education System (SNET).
- Centres for vocational training, which cater for a further 20 per cent. These prepare students for work rather than for higher education, and are run by the National College for Professional Technical Education (CONALEP), which is also part of the SNET.

Educational guidance services are found in most higher secondary schools both public and private, but until recently had little concrete support at national level – in spite of the legislative rhetoric, and the sporadic efforts of the SNOE. In 1994, however, SEP designed a general framework for educational guidance and counselling in higher secondary schools, signalling that this activity (*orientación educativa*) was seen as an important element in the curriculum.

Technical education

In Mexico, technical education is an important sector of education in its own right. The SEP, through one of its five assistant secretariats, is responsible for co-ordinating SNET – the nation-wide system of technical institutions already referred to.

This system offers technical education at four levels: job skills training (for which there are no formal academic requirements); technical high schools and vocational and technical programmes in bivalent upper secondary schools; and technical higher education (at undergraduate and post graduate levels).

There are 3 700 lower secondary technical schools across the country administered, since decentralisation, by the states. The pupils in them receive educational guidance and counselling services from a wide range of people: counsellors, social workers, academic advisors and librarians. In the 1994/95 school year, in parallel with the general lower secondary schools, *orientación educativa* was for the first time incorporated into the curriculum of the third year of lower secondary technical schools.

Higher secondary technical education is largely (90 per cent) controlled through SEP, and caters for 75 000 students – over 28 per cent of all high school education. An enormous range of schools and specialist centres prepare young people for jobs, and are particularly important in rural areas. Both educational and vocational guidance are important in such schools, especially in the light of recent changes: for example, agricultural technicians who used to be employed directly by the government must now be prepared for self-employment. Currently, though, there is an average of only one specialist counsellor per school.

Higher education

Mexico has 401 universities and technological institutes – both private and public – and 334 teacher training colleges. Some 1.25 million students are enrolled: over 14 per cent of the 20-24 age group.

Educational guidance is well-established in some institutions – for example, the National University of Mexico (UNAM) has had a guidance department since 1958. UNAM's system – which includes educational, personal and career guidance – aims to integrate students into the university, improve their chances of good results, and help them to identify their interests and aptitudes and choose appropriate occupational fields.

As mentioned above, some universities have their own upper secondary schools. UNAM, which delivers 11 per cent of all the undergraduate education in Mexico, has a vast student population of 150 000 undergraduate and graduate students on six different campuses. It is also responsible for 115 000 higher secondary school students in *preparatorias* and *colegios de ciencias y humanidades*, and has links with 200 private schools.

The university's counselling department advises students in all these schools, organising conferences, seminars, exhibitions and visits, and offering individual or group guidance – sometimes by mail or telephone. The service is free, except to the private schools. About 100 counsellors are working in the schools, and 45 in the university itself.

Some faculties have their own arrangements for supporting their students: for example, UNAM's engineering faculty has 15 counsellors whose main aim is to prevent students dropping out. They are on the look out for problems, teach study skills, and offer one-to-one advice. They also support faculty staff, running courses on issues such as good teaching techniques and communication skills.

The National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), which serves over 45 000 high school students and 60 000 undergraduate and post graduate students, is a network of institutions which specialise in engineering, technology, science and administration. It has operated a programme for some years, and is now shifting from purely educational guidance (such as developing good study habits) to active career guidance aimed at inserting young people into the labour market more efficiently. In the long run, the department's activities are due to be completely replanned to form a new Juvenile Guidance programme, based on group work, which will focus in particular on high school students in the schools attached to IPN, and integrate health education, personal development, educational issues and vocational guidance.

THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

There could be said to be three key transition points in the Mexican guidance system. The first is at the end of lower secondary school, when students decide whether or not to stay in the system, and what upper secondary school they should go to. The second is at the age of 18 or 19 when they leave upper secondary school to start a course in higher education. And thirdly comes the shift from education into work – which is not really a fixed transition point. Children from the most deprived families – as in many countries – are expected to contribute to the family income from a very early age, and self-employment, especially for the poor, is more common than paid jobs. So this transition can occur at any time, from any level of schooling.

The move from primary to lower secondary school at the age of 12 does not seem to be considered a significant transition point in guidance terms: there is almost no choice of school, and the vast majority of children simply move up from the feeder primary schools. Little attempt is made to ease this transition, and there are few links (such as visits by pupils or teachers, or liaison between staff) between the two levels of school. Any problems must be dealt with by the child, the family, or perhaps a sympathetic teacher.

Transition point 1

Although only a minority make the transition from lower to upper secondary school, it is in many ways the most crucial point in the system, because – as outlined above – the range of different higher secondary institutions is so complex that young people and their parents sometimes need a great deal of help in making appropriate choices. As a result, much emphasis is placed on pure information regarding exactly what is available. The SOE is currently attempting to make the system more transparent. If the various options were clearer, it is thought, fewer young people would leave school at this stage.

Young people in Mexico City can approach SOE directly for help in choosing a higher secondary course; the secretariat employs its own counsellors, and operates ten telephone advice lines between May and August. It also runs 16 mini-offices or booths throughout the city where young people can get both information and guidance on secondary options; each one is staffed by two psychologists. In 1994, the phone line dealt with 12 000 queries, and the booths with 35 000 – although not all queries concerned this particular transition point. Five or six of the other states have their own versions of this service, but in other areas students must find their own way.

Transition point 2

The nature of this transition varies a great deal according to the type of advice students have already had. All higher secondary schools have departments for educational guidance – some more effective than others – and in some schools there is a well-developed programme covering personal and social education, health issues and career guidance. Students destined for higher education may already be at a high school attached to a university, and (controversially) therefore have an automatic right of entry so long as they pass their exams. On such a well-marked track as this there is sometimes little need for intervention. Other students may in effect have made their career choice already by choosing a specialist higher secondary school at the age of 15 – in administration, for example, or science, or social science. Visits to universities or other institutions of higher education are common, and when a school is part of a university, professors and other faculty members may visit the school to describe what their establishment can offer.

Transition point 3

The transition from school or higher education to working life, as previously explained, can happen at virtually any age or stage in the Mexican system. Since career guidance (as opposed to educational guidance) only really makes sense in conditions of choice, it only begins to be relevant when young people have stayed in the system for long enough to gain some qualifications. From the age of 14 or so, it is in theory available in most Mexican schools, but whether an individual student is offered it or not depends very much on the area of the country, and what kind of institution he or she attends. In some cases, career choices are in effect made at 15, with the choice of a specialist high school.

Transitions from higher education tend to be smoothed by the guidance team and professors within individual faculties. Especially in the more vocational subjects, many have extensive links with commerce, industry or the civil service. Work experience for students is becoming more common, and students often work for companies in their vacations; 90 per cent of the students in UNAM's Business School, for example, already have a job when they finish their course. The labour market in Mexico is in the process of change, and the idea of impersonally slotting graduates with the right qualifications into a range of labour market vacancies is relatively new. Families still have an important role to play, and companies with vacancies are likely to get in touch with individual contacts in higher education – especially in the private universities. UNAM, which is traditionally associated with the public service, is currently trying to forge stronger links with the private sector in order to give its graduates – especially economics graduates – a wider range of opportunities.

THE ROLE OF INNOVATION

The Mexican government has for a long time wanted to establish a closer relationship between the education system and national employment policies. For example, SEP is legally charged with setting up, promoting and supervising training programmes for job skills – including vocational counselling – in collaboration with "other agencies of the federal, state and city governments, public and private entities and trusts created for that purpose". But the different aims of the education service and the employment service have made this difficult.

Now, however, the idea of *orientación educativa* is increasingly widely accepted – and agreement is being reached that ideally it contains four elements:

- *orientación escolar* (improvement of study habits and adaptation to the school environment);
- *orientación psicosocial* (i.e. counselling related to health, sexuality and prevention of drug addiction);

- *orientación vocacional* (related to knowledge of self, career information and vocational decision-making).
- *orientación profesional* (guidance related to employment opportunities and professional development).

In November 1994, the SEP established a general framework *orientación educativa* at the higher secondary level. It defines objectives for each of the four areas outlined above, describes the professional profile and function of the "vocational counsellor", identifies the resources and materials necessary for his or her work, emphasises the need to involve mainstream teachers and parents, and proposes research topics and evaluation activities. As previously pointed out this signals clearly the importance attached to such activities by the secretariat. As might be expected from its roots in educational guidance, the underlying direction of this model is clearly developmental – rather than simply focused on transitions – and offers a sound conceptual basis for future development.

SECRETARIAT OF LABOUR'S INVOLVEMENT

Labour and employment policy are the responsibility of central government, as is education policy making – but the states are newly responsible for administering most of the schools. These divisions of responsibility, along with the comparative inexperience of the states in running their own affairs, may make the establishment of a coherent system of educational guidance and career advice hard to achieve – especially since job training is largely the responsibility of the Secretariat of Labour and has become rather divorced from education. The Secretariat of Labour has wanted for some years to develop closer links between the education system and the labour market and move towards a system which encourages lifelong learning – since many workers have out-of-date skills. Currently, an important attempt is being made to identify specific educational skills linked to individual occupations – at a time when occupations themselves are changing and in many cases becoming broader.

Mexican workers – both young people entering the labour market and older workers – need good information and advice on job opportunities in their local area, and employers too need help in identifying their own needs and publicising vacancies in the most efficient way. Local Employment Centres, which offer both an exchange of information between employers and workers and job placement services, are staffed by specially-trained economists and sociologists. In their attempts to match supply and demand, they are focusing more and more on the need for training and retraining, and are charged with forming local links with the technical education system. The aim is eventually to collaborate on a regular basis with local schools, and young people who come to Employment Centres requiring guidance as opposed to information are normally referred to educational institutions. But there is a great deal of bridge-building to be done before effective links are possible.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Most counsellors (estimated at 15 000 across the country) have bachelors' degrees in pedagogy, psychology or the social sciences. Few currently have any specialist training, but opportunities to train are increasing; three teacher colleges and nine universities now offer postgraduate qualifications in educational guidance. SOE also runs five consecutive three-day training courses every six months, training 300 counsellors at a time.

EVALUATION

Individual counselling departments within institutions may evaluate their own efforts, but there is no monitoring or evaluation of educational or career guidance on a national basis. The Mexican job placement service, which has been strengthened with the aid of a grant from the World Bank, reports regularly to that organisation, but the criteria – the number of successful job placements – are relatively crude and do not include client satisfaction with the quality of service.[15]

CONCLUSION

The long-standing national commitment to developmental educational guidance within Mexican schools and higher education is a real strength, and offers a sound foundation for a shift towards a more career-oriented service. Some upper secondary schools have well-thought-out and impressive programmes which are well-integrated with the rest of the school, but this good practice needs to be more widely disseminated.

The overall emphasis on educational approaches ties in with the focus of the education system as a whole, which is very much on personal development. The relative lack of emphasis on real career advice reflects the complexity of the labour market. There is growing anxiety concerning the large numbers of young people who drop out of education, when good qualifications would enable them to better themselves economically. Ensuring that all children do attend school during the compulsory years, and improving staying-on rates at 14 or 15, are seen as pressing priorities. It may be that the new compulsory courses in lower secondary schools will have a positive effect.

The system for technical education is beginning to address unemployment issues, and the service offered by Employment Centres is fast improving, with the aid of investment by the World Bank. These have the potential to become an important source of advice for young people attempting to find a job.

But it is hard to know how widespread the most positive developments are. There is an overall lack of co-ordination, and very different levels of provision in different institutions. The most striking characteristic of educational and career guidance in Mexico is its enormous variability. Some young people are offered an excellent service incorporating personal, educational and careers advice. Others receive virtually nothing.

Of course, the enormous numbers of students who must be serviced is a significant problem, as is the training of counsellors. Since counsellors are too few in number, overworked and, in many cases, undertrained, status is often a problem. Information and materials for counsellors can be hard to find. Their contribution tends not to be valued or understood, and liaison between the counselling department and other teachers is a common problem. Often both the authorities and personnel within the schools are poorly informed about the role of the guidance service. It is noticeable that the most successful school guidance departments tend to be those which are validated by a school principal who understands the importance of their contribution.

In the absence of official statistics, and because the states are autonomous, the true national picture with regard to career guidance is very hard to assess. There is no evaluation of the system (apart from the Employment Centres), and without this type of information, systematic improvement will be hard to achieve.

Case Studies

Most of the good practice in educational and career guidance, some of which is excellent, exists in the upper secondary schools – by which stage (as indicated above) certain key choices have in many cases already been made. This does seem something of a mismatch, because according to SOE, the trickiest transition point is often between lower and upper secondary school. Guidance services are different in every school. The following case studies look at variations in the approach taken by three different upper secondary schools in Mexico City.

SCHOOL A

This autonomous upper secondary school, founded in 1973, is funded directly by the SEP. It used to be bivalent, but has recently been redesignated as a pre-university school. However, elements of its old identity remain, in that students must still do some technical education, and an unusual degree of attention is paid to preparation for the world of work.

The school, like most Mexican schools, operates two shifts, catering in all for over 5 000 students. It has a department of eight specialist counsellors, who are responsible for designing a programme for the students, implementing it and evaluating its success. They devise a great deal of their own material, and the department aims to innovate constantly in order to respond to the students' needs. Materials are updated every semester as a result of feedback from students and teachers – all students submit written anonymous evaluations.

The current programme is based on group work and workshops covering educational guidance (for example, workshops on study skills, understanding school texts, or on problems of reasoning in maths or physics), career counselling (where the counsellors aim to bring together the students' individual interests and ambitions with labour market information), and personal development. Role play and other active learning methods are common techniques – for example, the department recently put on a play for parents dramatising the problems of adolescence.

An important stage for the students is the first half of their second year, when they choose subject options for their final year. The guidance department works closely with teachers in this process, so that everyone shares the same frame of reference, and guidance is seen as an integral part of the school's activities. Specialist updating courses are offered to counsellors and teaching staff alike, and mainstream subject teachers are encouraged to see themselves as "emergent counsellors". Staff at the school agreed that this degree of success would have been unlikely, had not the principal himself been keen to encourage this approach and given strong backing to the efforts of the guidance department.

SCHOOL B

This school is a *Colegio de Ciencias y Humanidades* belonging to the National University of Mexico (UNAM). Four years ago it began an innovative system of peer tutoring, whereby 35 students act as liaison between their peer group and the guidance department. Their role is to gain the confidence of other students and find out what they require; the guidance department puts on workshops and other programmes in response. Currently, the topics most in demand are subject choice, and guidance with regard to careers the department arranges visits to different university faculties (mostly within UNAM), and to local companies. The peer tutors also encourage students with personal problems (such as family difficulties or drug abuse) to go for one-to-one advice from the department.

This scheme is funded by a charitable foundation which aims to encourage leadership among young people. The peer tutors get two days of training, plus courses on public speaking and personal development, and weekly meetings with the department of psychopedagogy within the school.

SCHOOL C

This upper secondary school, part of the National Polytechnic Institute, specialises in administration and the social sciences. It follows the common guidance programme laid down by the IPN for its high school students, which is based on three modules: academic achievement, human relations, and vocational guidance. All students receive one hour per week of this guidance curriculum (mostly taught through workshops and other active methods), and can ask for personal attention if they want it.

When students first enter the school, they begin their induction cycle with a "welcome week", followed by information on the academic rules of the school, and advice on good study habits. At the end of their first year the guidance department organises conferences and meetings for them to choose their specialisations for the second year. During the second year, their programme focuses on personal issues, using role-playing techniques and socio-drama, and during the third and final year students identify their interests and aptitudes, using psychometric tests. The last block in the programme concentrates on information related to certain fields of further study. About three quarters of the students go on to higher education, and the remaining 25 per cent go straight into jobs which, normally, they have already found before they leave school. Students who experience problems at work can come back to the school for further guidance.

This guidance department (which is made up of 11 counsellors for about 4 250 students) is currently planning to improve its personal counselling. The new arrangements will incorporate a pioneering tutoring programme: tutors will be responsible for establishing links between students, parents, teachers and the authorities. Issues such as drugs, sexuality, adolescence, communication and family problems will be explored and parents' conferences will be an important feature.

SCOTLAND
Will privatisation deliver what the client wants?

OVERVIEW

In Scotland, responsibility for educational and career guidance is divided between the local education authorities and the Scottish Office (a national ministry responsible to the Minister of State) which is in charge of overall education and employment policy.[36] Guidance in schools is an integral part of the curriculum, usually taught as part of a programme of personal and social education. Furthermore, every secondary school is linked to a careers officer employed by the local careers service. Guidance in further education colleges and universities, however, is far less systematic, as is guidance for young people who have left school and are looking for a job, or are in a job but want to change.

Although educational and career guidance is therefore an integral part of the Scottish system for young people aged between 12 and 18, the service that young people actually receive is rather uneven. In some cases such guidance is a strong feature of what the school offers all its pupils; but elsewhere it may come into play only at transition points and at moments of crisis. It very much depends on: the quality of the staff in particular schools and colleges; the links made between the school or college and other agencies; links made between the school or college and employers; and the uptake and use made of particular programmes.

A strong and effective careers service with clear links to schools, colleges of further education, and young people in training with employers would be the key to improved provision. The service has recently been reorganised to strengthen its links with training and employment through the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). In future, careers services will be offered by private companies (mostly formed through the setting up of partnerships between the established careers service and the LECs), which will tender for business from schools, colleges, LECS and local industry. So long as care is taken to preserve existing expertise, these new arrangements should make the service more focused and effective, since every school will have to enter into a specific service-level agreement with one of the new companies as to the respective roles they will play in delivering career guidance to students.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

Central government[37] responsibility for guidance rests mainly with the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, which includes a Careers Service Branch. This department lays down the national structure for the guidance system in schools, and publishes national performance indicators for school self-assessment (which include performance indicators for effective career guidance). The department, through Scottish Enterprise, also funds the Local Enterprise Companies, which organise training in their areas and in the future will link up with the education authorities to form careers service partnership companies.

The responsibility on the ground is divided between schools and colleges, which are part of the education system, and the Careers Service, which is linked to the employment and training system through the LECs. Both sectors are currently undergoing considerable administrative upheaval.

Scottish schools are administered by the education authorities (EAs), but in 1993 Scotland's 43 further education colleges became "incorporated" (*i.e.* independent of the EAs.) and now run their own affairs. The EAs themselves are also facing big changes, since local government in Scotland has just been reorganised into a single tier system, under which 28 unitary authorities have become responsible for all local services including education. In April 1995 local councillors were elected for the first time to the new bodies, which took over from the former authorities on 1 April 1996.

Education authorities devise guidelines on guidance for schools and colleges, and run advisory services for schools on many aspects of education including guidance (although many of these are now being withdrawn as the authorities move to the new arrangements). Some such as Strathclyde (the biggest education authority in Scotland and due to be broken up under reorganisation) have their own inspection and quality assurance arrangements, which have from time to time reported on the quality of guidance in schools.

Some education authorities also run an Education Welfare service aimed at preventing truancy, and this has sometimes developed a much broader role, guiding and counselling young people in difficulty, involving guidance teachers in the schools, social workers and psychologists acting together as a welfare team.

The careers service, until now run by the EAs, is also about to be transformed as the result of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act of 1993. Hitherto, it was the duty of the education authorities to provide a careers service; but now the duty is that of the Secretary of State for Scotland. He or she is responsible for awarding contracts to the private companies which will deliver a careers service to schools and the rest of the community.

In all cases, these companies have been set up through partnerships between LECs and education authorities. The services to offered to educational institutions will be further developed through the use of service level agreements, which will make quite clear what role the careers officers will play in each school or college's guidance programme. The careers company will agree to provide certain services, and the institution certain curriculum structures and facilities. There is little doubt that the planning and discussion necessary to draw up the new service level agreements, as well as the actual delivery of these agreements, will improve the quality of guidance offered to students in many Scottish schools.

Primary schools

Scottish children begin school at five, and transfer to secondary school at the age of 12. Although Scotland's national curriculum – the 5-14 programme – was designed to bridge the gap between primary and secondary school, and to ensure a continuous, coherent curriculum, it does not include at the primary stage a foundation for guidance in future years. This is a cause for regret for many such as Sheila Semple, who wrote in 1994: "Disappointingly the 5-14 programme does not make explicit the way in which an understanding of self and the world starts in children of primary age. A structured input to the primary curriculum is required – not it should be emphasised, to influence vocational decision-making but to lay the basis for progression to a broader and more active approach to learning throughout life" (Semple, 1994).

Comprehensive schools

In Scotland, all secondary schools are comprehensive and offer a full curriculum between the ages of 12 (S1) and 16 (S4). Secondary schools must offer educational and career guidance, and every pupil is allocated a guidance teacher who is responsible for his or her well-being. In most schools, students also receive one hour a week of personal and social education, which in most cases begins with understanding of themselves, their families and their relationships, progressively broadening to include understanding of the world around them, including the world of work. These courses are not, however, a compulsory element of the curriculum, and responsibility for organising and delivering them rests with the principal and his or her senior management team – so they vary a great deal from school to school. Careers officers, too, have a role to play, and normally participate in the arrangements for delivering schools' programmes of personal and social education.

The seminal document of the last decade in setting the framework and establishing the direction for school guidance was "More than Feelings of Concern", published by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum in 1986. One of its goals is "to ensure that each pupil knows and is known personally and in some depth by at least one member of the guidance staff".

Further education colleges

Scotland has 43 colleges of further education, but unlike the position south of the border, it is relatively unusual for students of school age to attend them; half of all further education students in Scotland are over 20. Further education colleges offer a much wider range of courses than schools do, both academic and vocational, but they are increasingly oriented towards vocational education and customised training programmes structured to meet the needs of employers. Most courses include work experience, and students are often expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Although 75 per cent of Scottish young people now stay at school past the statutory leaving age of 16, only 5 per cent choose to go on to further education colleges, and there is currently some anxiety that school may not be the best environment for all these students. The pressures on schools and colleges to compete for custom may conflict with their duty to offer disinterested advice to potential students.

The standards and quality for further education are laid down by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, and every college should have a corporate plan which must be submitted to the Department, showing how it intends to achieve those standards, in particular through an efficient guidance system. According to the 1992 Her Majesty's Inspectorate's report on "Quality and efficiency in further education colleges", "every student should have a guidance tutor and have access to an ongoing guidance programme, including progress review and opportunities for career advice, learning support and personal guidance if required". It urges partnership with community education services, employers and Local Enterprise Companies in providing this guidance.

But although the intention is there, provision at this level is distinctly uneven, and a great deal depends on the quality of staff in particular colleges, what links they make with other agencies and employers, and what use they make of available programmes. As the modular courses offered by the Scottish Vocational Educational Council (SCOTVEC) become more popular and widespread after the age of 16, and vocational training becomes less focused on specific skills for particular occupations, young people – and older ones too – will need effective guidance and counselling to find their way through the ever-increasing complexity of options.

But many colleges have not yet thought this through. As Alan Brown of the Scottish Further Education Unit pointed out in 1994: "There is a danger that by bolting on new services and posts this will create the image of enhanced provision (...) There is a need to move from *ad hoc* provision to developing cross-college strategic plans for guidance". Although some further education colleges are now evolving development plans which commit the college to improved guidance services, have appointed staff with a specialist guidance role and allocated new accommodation, and are introducing quality standards for guidance through the use of the Scottish Quality Management System, it still looks likely that heavy demands will be placed on guidance systems which, in some colleges, will prove to be inadequate in meeting the needs of the students.

Tertiary education

Guidance and counselling at universities and colleges of education (where teachers are trained) probably shows least development of all, and still tends to operate on a self-referral basis. Most institutions have a careers office to advise students who are looking for a job, and a counselling service for those in difficulties. Most students also have an adviser of studies, but would not normally see him or her more than about once a year unless problems arise. All these arrangements tend to operate separately – although counselling services sometimes offer academic support such as help with study skills or examination techniques, and both careers officers and counsellors may administer various psychometric and aptitude tests, sometimes co-ordinated, sometimes not. One of the most fully-developed University Careers Service is that run by the University of Edinburgh, which has for the last five years been moving towards a developmental model. Students are encouraged to keep a cumulative personal and career development record, which has been planned in co-operation with the academic departments.

It is a feature of Scottish higher education that many undergraduates in urban areas live at home; for example, 70 per cent of the students at Paisley University live with their parents. And nation-wide, 78 per cent of students attend higher education locally, and stay in Scotland to work. This means that they still draw extensively on informal sources of support and information – parents, friends, family, the local community and the job centre.

THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

There are four key transition points in Scotland: the first two, at the ages of twelve and 14, involve movement between different levels of education which have serious implications for the future career of the young person concerned. The nature of later transitions – particularly whether or not a young person leaves school early or stays on in school or in further or higher education – are often in effect dictated by the advice given and choices made at these early stages.

The third main transition, normally occurring between 16 and 18 is the progression from school to college or university, and the fourth, which may occur at any age between 16 and about 24, is the move from education (including higher education) to working life.

Transition point 1

At the age of twelve, young people in Scotland move from primary school to secondary school. Research has shown that this is a significant transition point in terms of future achievement and life chances. Choice of secondary school was greatly simplified in 1974 by the introduction of a national comprehensive system, and the Parents' Charter of 1989 gave parents choice of school within the state sector.[38]

Sources of advice and information include school prospectuses (which include data on examination results), visits to secondary schools in order to compare them, informal information from the parents of secondary pupils, and advice from teachers at the child's primary school and at prospective secondary schools. Real freedom of choice is, however, often limited by geography and lack of transport, community traditions, lack of spare places in popular schools, and the wish of many 12-year-olds to go to the same school as their friends.

Guidance within the schools at this stage is aimed at smoothing the transition rather than facilitating choice, and a common procedure is well-established. The standard practice has three phases:

- in the final year of primary school (P7), a guidance teacher from the secondary school which most pupils will be attending visits the primary to talk to the pupils, answer their questions, and deal with any anxieties they may have;
- pupils who are going to make the transition spend some time (usually between two days and one week) in the secondary school they are going to go to; this visit is usually co-ordinated by a guidance teacher from the secondary school, and the pupils follow a version of the secondary school timetable;
- all new pupils are assigned to a guidance teacher who will be a reference point for them during their first year in secondary school.

Some secondary schools have a system of "first level guidance" (sometimes called "first line guidance"); under this system, the class tutor (often known in Scotland as the "register teacher,"), who is normally only responsible for attendance matters, deals with pastoral issues as well. He or she can ask the more specialised "second line" guidance staff for help if necessary, or refer a child to them.[39]

Transition point 2

The next key transition is at the age of 14, at the end of the second year of secondary school (S2). Pupils now choose their subjects of study for the next two years, at the end of which they take their national examinations (known as Standard

Grade). The results of this examination largely determine whether a pupils leaves school and begins his or her working life at 16, continues his or her education at a further education college, or stays at school for one or two years more. A recent initiative – University Special Entrance (USE) – aims to help disadvantaged young people to go to university by monitoring their progress and giving their parents regular reports on how they are doing.

This choice is set within national guidelines which try to make sure that each student follows a balanced curriculum and keep their options open for the future.[40] The final choice is made as the result of consultation between parent, pupil and guidance teacher; this may not be carried out face-to-face, but through forms and questionnaires.

Research carried out by the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Educational Sociology suggests that:

- the least informed and least educated parents tend to allow their offspring to choose for themselves;
- pupils usually choose the subjects they are good at;
- guidance teachers are heavily influenced by what they perceive as pupils' different ability levels, encouraging "bright" students to follow academic courses, and steering "less bright" students towards vocational subjects;
- although traditional choices in relation to gender (*i.e.* girls favouring home economics and secretarial studies and boys going for technical subjects) are being challenged, they still exert a strong influence.

The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI)

A significant element in this transition is the TVEI programme for 14- to 18-year-olds, directly funded by central government from 1984 to encourage schools to pursue a more entrepreneurial, industry-oriented curriculum. Although highly controversial at the time, it was eventually adopted by most schools – as a way of getting access to new technology, and in order to develop their courses in personal and social development.

The initiative set new standards of both funding and quality, and has had a marked influence on the practice of schools throughout Scotland by promoting personal and social development programmes through Records of Achievement, profiling, modular courses and work experience. All pupils in Scottish secondary schools now get at least one week of work experience, and Records of Achievement are now becoming standard practice. Each pupil has one of these documents, which details not only qualifications gained but activities outside school (summer jobs, sports teams, choirs, community work and so on) and the student's own assessment of his or her progress, personality and ambitions. The idea is to present a positive picture for employers or educational institutions of what each individual is like.

Transition point 3

The year after Standard Grade, young people may sit 'Highers' – traditional externally-assessed academic examinations; good passes in five subjects qualify them to go to university or colleges of teacher education. Guidance teachers often encourage young people to stay at school for a further "maturing" year before embarking on university, which places a great deal of emphasis on independent learning.

At this stage, students may opt for a vocational route – which can be followed during the later years at school, at further education colleges or in the workplace. SCOTVEC offers a menu of over 3 000 modules (each usually lasting for 40 hours of study time) covering the whole occupational spectrum. These are taken as individual units – at evening class, on day or block release from work, or through various forms of open learning. Assessment is normally internal and criterion-referenced, and completed modules are entered on a cumulative Record of Education and Training which can be built up into a National Certificate.

The multiplicity of qualifications has been confusing for employers, and even teachers and careers officers can find the articulation of courses and career paths hard to follow. Some schools may have a careers co-ordinator, whose job is to forge links with the careers service. Others may have a school-industry link co-ordinator who oversees and organises vocational programmes, including work experience. In most schools, guidance teachers (whose knowledge of vocational courses and the labour market may be sketchy) still play a key role in the transition from school to higher education and work. That the quality of this advice is variable is a weakness acknowledged by both teachers and students.

Transition point 4

Young people may enter the workforce in a number of ways, and at different ages. Some leave school at 16 or 17 and get jobs with or without training attached; others may begin a period of unemployment. Skill Seekers (see case study) is a new initiative for school leavers which offers them jobs combined with training which leads to vocational qualifications; the idea is that eventually every 16- or 17-year-old who is not in full-time education or training should be in a job of this type. Guidance towards this type of job placement is offered by the careers service at school or in further education colleges and within the LECs, and at Job Centres.

At 18, others enter the workforce having taken their Higher Certificate, then at various ages between 20 and 24 young people leave college or university with a wide range of vocational and academic qualifications. They may be advised by specialist counsellors in the institution, or by the careers service, or by job centre personnel. A few may approach private advice companies.

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Currently, most guidance staff in schools, colleges and universities receive no pre-service training apart from initial teacher training (in the case of schools), and training in guidance and counselling techniques is not compulsory. There is a wide range of in-service courses, and about one in three guidance teachers have some sort of qualification in the subject. A sizeable minority, though, have only undergone a basic induction course in the subject, and a few have had no training at all.

Careers officers are normally graduates with a diploma in career guidance. As the new Scottish Vocational Qualification develops, though, qualifications in this field might move towards becoming based on skills and competencies.

EVALUATION

Her Majesty's Inspectorate (which still exists in its traditional form in Scotland) is responsible for evaluating the performance of individual schools, and this includes the effectiveness of the guidance they offer. HMI also publishes national indicators for colleges of further education, but as yet they are only used by the colleges for self-review. 1996 will see the publication of a two-year research report by Edinburgh University on guidance in secondary schools, and an Inspectorate report on guidance.

ROLE OF INNOVATION

A key preoccupation in Scotland is the development of services for poorly qualified young people from deprived areas, who are at risk of permanent unemployment. In areas of extreme deprivation (of which Scotland has a number), the education authority may bring together a range of professionals from different agencies, in an attempt to provide the best form of support for young people who need guidance; most education authorities have their own policies and initiatives aimed at easing the transition from school to work, and for targeting young people at risk.

An example of this type of initiative is "supported study" – a key initiative taken by Strathclyde Region as part of its Anti-Poverty Strategy. The region has been spending over 1 million pounds a year in 150 schools, setting up regular evening sessions with teachers in attendance for young people who need help with their school work. This approach can be very flexible – for example, in one rural school in a deprived area, youth information workers also come to the study sessions, offering advice and confidential counselling. There has been a large demand for this service, and an evaluation published in 1992 showed that there was an increasing uptake. Most of the inquiries made by young people were about jobs and careers, housing and homelessness, finance, and further education. They also wanted confidential information on AIDS, pregnancy and various forms of abuse (see MacBeath, 1993).

CONCLUSION

A key strength of the Scottish system is the central direction from the Scottish Office, which represents a long-standing national commitment to guidance as an integral aspect of school education dating from 1968. The education authorities also support guidance, and include it in their evaluations of school performance. HMI, too, evaluates progress in guidance. The Scottish Office, with HMI management, funds research and development in the field.

Guidance is seen as the responsibility of every teacher, and guidance teachers remain part of the body of the school staff because they retain their teaching responsibilities. They play a key role in forging links between primary and secondary schools, and developing links between schools, further education and employers. Positive developments such as Records of Achievement have been important.

There are still important weaknesses, however. Provision is very uneven, and sometimes *ad hoc* and fragmented. There is no pre-service training for guidance staff in schools, colleges or universities, in-service training is patchy, and there is a lack of consistency in workplace guidance. Employers have few incentives to offer guidance to their young workers, and no sanctions if they fail to do so.

Under the Citizen's Charter, students in tertiary education can expect to have access to guidance and counselling services which should offer academic, career and vocational advice. But the current shift towards a modular curriculum at post-16 level is placing increasingly heavy demands on the guidance system which schools and further education colleges are not able to meet sufficiently, due to lack of time and personnel, and insufficient knowledge of the labour market.

The careers service has recently undergone restructuring, which naturally entailed upheavals and uncertainties, and careers officers in some areas are in short supply since some have been seconded to work with LECs and others to further education colleges in order to upgrade the service they are offering to their students. However, most people within the service are responding positively and with vigour to the new challenges, and the result of the reorganisation should be a more focused and responsive system.

It is to be hoped that innovative projects such as "supported study" will continue under the new arrangements – and indeed be more widely disseminated. Creative approaches like this are crucial if young people who have (for one reason or another) missed out on the mainstream service are to receive the advice and support which they need. The publications already referred to will provide an up-to-date view of current provision and needs, and are likely to recommend that it is the management of guidance, in particular, which needs to be strengthened in many schools.

Case Studies

RENFREWSHIRE SKILL SEEKERS

Skill Seeker programmes (which have now replaced Youth Training for early school leavers in virtually the whole of Scotland) are funded by the Local Enterprise Companies. Most operate a "credit card" system through which young people between 16 and 18 can "buy" a certain amount of training. Renfrewshire Skill Seekers is funded by Renfrewshire Enterprise, the LEC for this eastern area on the outskirts of Glasgow, centred on the major town of Paisley. The programme represents about one fifth of the 28 million pounds annual budget of the LEC.

Young people in the area first receive information in school on what options are open to them, and are encouraged to identify a career area which appeals to them, then they are expected to develop a Career Plan with the help of their careers officer. Although careers education within the school is run by the guidance teachers, they normally draw heavily on the expertise of the careers service. Careers officers work as a team based at the area offices, they usually have a case load of one or two schools each, and are responsible for working with employers and further education colleges as well. When young people leave school, they register with the careers service.

Renfrewshire Skill Seekers are determined to avoid both the "cheap labour" reputation which was associated with Youth Training, and the accusation that training is a substitute for a "real job". The underlying mission of the programme is to wipe out unskilled jobs, every young person should be offered a job with training attached. In 1995 between 1 700 and 1 800 young people were aiming at vocational qualifications through this programme. The target for 1996 was 2 000. The guidance they get emphasises that they are likely to change career three or four times in their lifetime, and that they should aim to be flexible.

Employers, too, need guidance if they are to offer vocational qualifications. Of about 2 500 Renfreshire companies, 1 000 belong to the programme. Before joining, if they want to organise the training element themselves, they are shown how to structure the competencies required for the qualification into 13-week chunks which should be achievable in their workplace. Others prefer to form partnerships with training providers – colleges or other training organisations.

HOME/SCHOOL/EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP

A major initiative of the Scottish Office Industry Department[41] in the 1990s has been the Partnership Programme, which has invested large sums of money in four relatively small areas of serious deprivation – aimed at tackling employment, training, education, housing, health and leisure problems simultaneously. In Ferguslie Park, an area of Paisley with high levels of unemployment, a purpose-built building houses the Home/School/Employment Partnership – a project which is funded for seven years in order to bring together local families, schools and employers.

The project focuses on three local secondary schools and their feeder primaries – ten schools in all, plus four pre-school institutions. The project starts working with families when the children are as young as 3, and the parents are encouraged to become more involved with their children's education, focusing on three key transition points: starting nursery or primary school, moving on to secondary school, and starting work. Once young people have left school, the project keeps in touch with them for a year. The goal is to get all families involved, but to offer special support to the most deprived. Currently, 10 per cent of the local school population – about 1 000 children in all – are receiving home visits from project workers aimed at supporting them through these transitions.

At the same time, local employers have been brought into the project as a way of raising their awareness of the problems of vulnerable young people as they move into work. As well as offering work experience and job placements of various kinds, some take part in residential work with the students – normally a three-day stay at a local outdoor centre, others have run mock interviews, or advice sessions on preparing curriculum vitae or filling in application forms.

The careers service also plays its part – particularly through Job Ideas and Information Generator-Computer Assisted Learning (JIIG-CAL), a software programme widely used in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, which matches a young person's interests and aptitudes with possible career opportunities.

NOTES

1. These case studies are designed to be illustrative, and cannot necessarily be treated as representative examples on which generalisations can be based.
2. Throughout this report, the term "tertiary" is used to denote education or training at a post-upper secondary level – in line with the standard ISCED classification system used by OECD. The level is not, therefore, the same as that of a "tertiary college" in the United Kingdom which caters for young people between 16 and 19, but is, rather, analogous to further and higher education after the age of 18/19.
3. Career guidance can also be referred to as vocational guidance.
4. Terminology is a persistent difficulty in this field: a symptom or part of the cause, perhaps, of its still marginal status. Throughout this study, a distinction is normally made between educational and career guidance, using the definitions outlined above. But there is currently a move in the United Kingdom and some other English speaking countries to use the umbrella term "career guidance" to cover both the first two elements identified above (as well as some aspects of the third). This usage is in keeping with the emerging definition of "career" as being the whole of an individual's personal, educational and occupational development, and in tune with policies such as lifelong learning. But the use of the word "career" in this way is not yet widespread except among some of those who work in the field, so this report tends to prefer the rather cumbersome term "educational and career guidance" in order to avoid misunderstandings.
5. Career guidance at this stage would entail understanding oneself and one's ambitions, and getting some experience of the world of work and the part it plays in people's lives, rather than being encouraged to make premature career decisions.
6. Guidance for the mentally or physically handicapped, or for other special needs of this type, is a specialist area not dealt with in this publication.
7. As the economic relationship between education and employment becomes better understood, some countries are attempting to integrate them more effectively at national level. For example, Australia has a super-department of Employment, Education and Training, and England and Wales recently combined two ministries to form the Department for Education and Employment. In September 1995, an Industry and Education Department was set up within the Scottish Office (the United Kingdom department

of government which administers Scottish affairs). These moves could eventually have a beneficial effect on career guidance in those countries.

8. Not surprisingly, this dichotomy is more complex than this basic outline would suggest. For example, in some countries schools normally frame their aims and mission statements in terms of students' individual needs – which also rank high in the value systems of individual teachers. But much of a school's practice may, in reality, be driven by the demands of the curriculum and external examinations. Similarly, guidance workers employed by the labour authorities may be highly committed to meeting the needs of the individuals they are advising – although they are not always in a position to take a truly developmental approach.

9. New Zealand also has a specialist careers service, which was established in 1990.

10. In 1996, this service – in line with current government policy with regard to many elements of the public service – was privatised. Each local careers service must now draw up service level agreements with individual schools, defining what exactly they will offer, and what part the schools must play in delivering effective guidance to their pupils.

11. This may be because in Japan the choice of company is more important than that of occupation – companies carry out much of their own training and occupational choice often takes place as part of this process.

12. Recently, the emphasis in Scotland has begun to move away from one-to-one remedial services of this type towards using psychologists as consultants in the management of whole classes or even schools. See *Supporting Positive Behaviour*, a set of resources for teachers developed by the Quality in Education Centre at the University of Strathclyde, and the local Psychological Services.

13. It is very noticeable that educational and career guidance in schools and colleges flourishes and is most successful in those institutions where the senior management – and especially the principal – understands its importance and validates it as an integral part of the school's educational mission.

14. This study is primarily concerned with transitions which involve education – that is, people are moving between different stages of education, or from education into training or work. Transitions between occupations or jobs are not the concern of this study, nor, by and large, is the move from unemployment into work.

15. Canada and Scotland differ somewhat here, since Canadian high schools offer a wide range of vocational options, unlike most Scottish secondary schools. Scottish policy makers are also concerned about the growing group of poorly-qualified young people who, lacking in confidence and knowing that they have little chance of a job, stay somewhat passively at school rather than taking the more adventurous route of further education and training – where they would find a wider range of courses and work-related options.

16. A recent report on career guidance for the New Zealand government observes: "To achieve its education and economic objectives, the Government has a core interest in the individual becoming self-steering in the labour market (...). Government intervention is necessary as failures in the market may result in individuals not obtaining for themselves suitable careers services" (Career Information and Guidance Review Panel, 1995).

17. The Indicators of International Education Systems Project, carried out for the OECD by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.

18. There is a general agreement on the need to shift the focus of labour market policies from the passive provision of income support to more active measures which assist re-employment. Such measures – which include placement and guidance services – are most effective when targeted on specific groups.

19. The material in this section is largely based on a NICEC Briefing Paper (1992) entitled *Economic Benefits of Career Guidance*, which draws on the results of a study jointly carried out by the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling and the Policy Studies Institute for the United Kingdom Department of Employment.

20. The other two areas identified as requiring improvement are the quality of initial education, and the incentives for enterprises and workers to invest in continued learning.

21. These figures are for 1993-94; in that year, 2-3 per cent of 10-15 year olds in Austria were in the upper grades of special schools.

22. These are referred to as Canada Employment Centres, or CECs.

23. In Saskatchewan, elementary schooling ends at grade five, in British Columbia at grade seven, and in Ontario and Manitoba at grade eight.

24. In four provinces (Quebec, British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba) there are no junior high schools; students move straight from elementary school into secondary school at a range of different ages; so grades six to nine may be found in several different types of school.

25. The Lions are a Service Club with branches across Canada. They carry out social and charitable work.

26. Charter Schools are publicly funded and free, but are independent foundations outside the jurisdiction of the local school board.

27. This is partly due to the difficulty of reaching agreement on what is meant by guidance.

28. There is a geographical difference, in that in the less prosperous south of the country state organisations such as school districts and employment offices are more significant and better funded, whereas in the north other types of institution are more active.

29. As the Italian university system has become increasingly overcrowded and poorly funded (average funding per student has fallen from 7.4 million lire to 5.4 million lire since 1989), it is becoming less popular, and the number of students has fallen back slightly.

30. The health education programme – which includes topics such as diet and nutrition, AIDs and drug abuse – is paid for by Milan, as part of a national project known as Young People 93. It aims to create a sense of unity among young people of all ages and their parents.

31. Japan has a two-tier system of local government. There are 47 prefectures, Tokyo being the biggest. These are run by directly elected governors, and representative councils. Every prefecture has a board of education which controls the prefectural public schools. Most upper secondary schools are controlled by prefectures. Each prefecture is divided into a number of municipalities, which may be based on cities, towns or villages. They also have directly elected heads (Mayors), representative councils and boards of education. The municipalities are responsible for most of the public elementary and lower secondary schools – except for special schools for handicapped children, many of which belong to the prefectures. Some wealthy urban municipalities control upper secondary schools as well.

32. From a 40 per cent share of overall secondary enrolments in the late 1950s/early 1960s, vocational school enrolments dropped to about a quarter of the total by 1994.

33. Now called SOE.

34. In line with many European countries, Mexico has retained the system which obliges pupils who have not met the required standard to repeat the year of study.

35. This is particularly important in the Mexican context, since many new jobs involve self-employment or are in the informal economy.

36. When the national government and the local authorities are controlled by different political parties, as has been the case during the late 1980s and early 1990s, this division of responsibility can become rather complex, or even uneasy.

37. "Central government" in this context means the Scottish Office, which runs Scottish affairs. Legislation passed by Parliament in Westminster does not pertain to Scotland unless it includes a special rider to that effect, and much public sector legislation is different.

38. Only about 3 per cent of Scottish parents choose to send their children to independent (*i.e.* fee-paying) schools.

39. This is a matter of some controversy in Scotland's main teacher union since teachers are being asked to extend their duties without any extra pay or promotion. Currently, involvement of register teachers in "first line guidance" is purely voluntary.

40. Pupils have to choose subjects within key "modes" – language, mathematics, scientific subjects, creative and aesthetic subjects, social education, physical education, and religious/moral education.

41. Now the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.

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